

**Domestic Violence in the Navy and Marine Corps:  
A Chaplain's Perspective**

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**by**

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# Domestic Violence Prevention in the Navy and Marine Corps:

## A Navy Chaplain's Perspective

by

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The intent of this project is to address the problem of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps and offer suggestions that should prevent this problem. Domestic violence threatens the fabric of our entire society. Many of us either have been or know someone who have been a victim of violence or who has suffered from a violent act. The culture, from which our sea service personnel come, largely sets the stage for domestic violence. They are the products of the larger culture in society. Therefore, domestic violence among service personnel in the sea services is as real as in the general population.

Coming into the military, these young men and women will experience some unique challenges. The rigors of military service can be both demanding and stressful. For the first time in their lives, they are away from their emotional support systems. Leadership is, therefore, saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that its personnel is protected from acts of violence, that victims of domestic violence are protected, and that all family members involved receive appropriate care. Concern for the welfare of sea services families, and the effects of family violence on military performance, prompted the establishment of programs several years ago that are designed to address and treat domestic violence problems. This project attempts to offer suggestions that will enhance existing programs, and hopefully prevent some domestic violence from occurring.

Chapter 2 clarifies the ethical responsibility for sea services leadership to do more about domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps. Specifically addressed are (1)

factors that contribute to domestic violence, (2) leadership's reaction to domestic violence in the sea services, and (3) the extent of the problem.

Chapter 3 looks at the sociological impact of domestic violence. There is no doubt that violence in our society has dramatically increased among children. A phenomenon that is taking everyone by storm is kids killing kids. Violence perpetuated by and toward children has increased dramatically. This dramatic increase is evident in every community, from urban areas to rural and more affluent communities. Military leadership should and are taking the lead at trying to rid the sea services of violence.

Chapter 4 examines the impact of domestic violence on the family. Military leadership plays an integral part in the battle against domestic violence. Just as the Navy fought discrimination and drug abuse, the same kind of energy and attention should be given to domestic violence. It is another social ill that destroys families, scars children, and ultimately affects military readiness. Since much of the domestic violence problem has been blamed on the breakdown in the family, leadership should be proactive by establishing programs that will strengthen families.

Chapter 5 advocates that domestic violence programs in the military should concentrate on treating the total person. This project suggests that there is a theological dimension to the domestic violence issue that is currently not being addressed. With this, it is suggested that the role of the chaplain be included in future programs designed to deal with domestic violence problems. A religious person who is victimized by acts of violence frequently faces questions such as, Why am I suffering? Where is God in my suffering? These are profound theological questions that can be answered by the chaplain.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the United States Navy Chaplain Corps for affording me the opportunity to serve the men and women in the sea services. It was during my service in the Navy that I became familiar with the enormous impact that domestic violence has on military readiness, families, individuals, and society as a whole. I also had the opportunity to work with, and learn from many competent and dedicated professionals who are responsible for the overall supervision of the Navy's domestic violence program. They certainly do credible work with helping young men and women in uniform come to grip with this very destructive behavior. I would like to thank Dr. William Clements, whose constant encouragement and belief in me convinced me to complete the project. I would like to thank Dr. Stephen Kim for particularly critically examining Chapter 5, and offering helpful suggestions. I would not have been able to complete this project were it not for the editorial assistance and support of my doctoral committee: Dr. William Clements, Dr. Stephen Kim, and Elaine Walker. They were extremely patient with my efforts, and rewarded me with expert guidance through each draft. Elaine Walker in the CST library was extremely helpful and always available to assist with the technical aspects of the project. I would also like to thank my sister, Geraldine Burt, who in spite of dealing with some physical challenges, found time to provide quality support to this project. I would like to thank my wife, Wanda, for supporting me during the many hours of demanding work that went into this project. She pushed and badgered me as each deadline approached, and encouraged me when I grew weary. Without her consistent monitoring, I am confident that I would not have completed this project in a timely fashion.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Violence is all around us. Television brings us live broadcasts of wars and conflicts among nations. The media is constantly bombarding our minds with gruesome pictures of violent acts. In addition, many of us have been victims of crimes, while others have witnessed or know of someone who has suffered a violent act. Violence among service members and their families is as real as it is in the general population. As we often say, young men and women in the Navy and Marine Corps are no different than those in the general population. They are products of the larger culture in our society. While the Navy and Marine may have a zero tolerance policy as it pertains to domestic violence, it still remains a problem of utmost concern to leaders in both the Navy and Marine Corps communities. Programs are in place to ensure that victims of domestic violence, as well as the perpetrator, receives the help that they need. In an effort to further address this significant problem, this project will offer suggestions and recommendations that should further impact the problem of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps.

### Problem Addressed

This project deals with the problem of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps. In spite of the aggressive efforts of the sea services to eliminate domestic violence, the problem still remains primarily due to a lack of understanding as to why men batter in the first place.

### Importance of the Problem

Violence among service members and their families is of utmost importance to leaders in the Navy and Marine Corps communities. The word “violence” has been



employed in so many different ways that we cannot always be sure that people using the word have the same notion in mind. In this research, I will use the term "violence" to describe the behavior that is intentionally designed to injure another person. "It's also possible to hurt others in many different ways; we might want to do psychological injury, when we belittle, insult, or curse someone. We may even try to hurt or damage someone physically. In each case, our purpose is to injure, or inflict some pain."<sup>1</sup> Many factors can place a family at risk for violent behavior, including: poor communication, marital discord, financial difficulties, child care responsibilities, inadequate parenting skills, family history of abuse and neglect, social isolation, drug and alcohol abuse, deployments or extended periods of family separation, role stereotypical views, and the special stresses of military life itself.

The Navy and Marine Corps have implemented a "zero-tolerance" domestic violence policy, recognizing domestic violence is not always easy, even for the victims. This is because domestic violence is much more than physical abuse. In fact, many women who are controlled by their partners and who live in danger and fear have never been physically assaulted. In the early stages, the pattern of abuse is hard to recognize. People in abusive relationships, however, consistently report that the abuse gets worse over time.

In the Navy and Marine Corps, domestic violence adversely effects such things as military readiness, job performance, family stability, human potential, morale and more. Domestic violence takes its toll not only on the abused, but also on everyone. Each person who is abused effects us all, and military leaders spend an inordinate amount of

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<sup>1</sup> Marie M. Fortune, Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers (Cleveland: Pilgram Press, 1991) 3.

time reacting to domestic violence situations within the command.

Traditionally, love, affection, emotional support, and gentleness are qualities frequently associated with the stereotypical image of intimate relationships. The notion that individuals would use physical violence against those they supposedly love seems contradictory. Yet, it becomes increasingly apparent that individuals not only resort to the use of violence against each other, but that the problem is far more extensive than previously thought.<sup>2</sup>

In the Military Lifestyle Magazine, Eric Schmidt reported that the number of confirmed spouse abuse cases among military families, climbed to 18.1 per 1000 spouses in 1993, from 12 cases per 1000 in 1988. Substantiated cases of child abuse have increased from 6 per 1000 to 6.6 per 1000.”<sup>3</sup> With these alarming statistics, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are taking a more active role in preventing family violence. Subsequently, I will present an integrative view of literature on domestic violence. From this view, I will recommend various issues that need to be addressed before any noticeable effective domestic violence intervention will occur.

Domestic violence happens in military families of all ranks and ages. In most cases, domestic violence involving a military family, Family Advocacy Program officials assign a caseworker to assess the victim’s safety and develop a safety plan. This may include application for a protective order, alternative living arrangements and ways to safeguard any children in the family. Throughout the process, victim’s advocates ensure that the victim’s medical, mental health and protection needs are being met.

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<sup>2</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 119.

It is very easy to slip into the attitude that this nightmare of violence in America is just “the way it is,” and there’s nothing we can do about it. As such, much of our problem stems from the fact that as a nation we have become tolerant of violent behavior. Persons who commit violence, and criminal acts, basically feel that they will go unpunished. The experts have told us that the way this generation view authority has changed remarkably since the early 1960s. Consequently, a system that cannot catch and hold criminals, or protect the innocent, is now being confronted with a rising tide of increasingly violent youths who have failed to learn, either from their families or society, how to behave. Thus, when a young recruit comes into the Navy and Marine Corps, he or she comes from a society that seems to condone violent behavior.

I believe that chaplains can become facilitators in addressing the domestic violence problem in the Navy and Marine Corps because of their significant history of service in the military. The Chaplain in the military represents the moral and spiritual compass within the command. They are men and women of God whose primary responsibility in the sea services is to provide pastoral care and counseling to the troops.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, services are to provide pastoral care and counseling to the troops. Therefore, everywhere they serve, in many instances they are the first ones the troops come to when there is a problem.

The Chaplain also plays a significant role in strengthening the home life of sea service personnel. And that goal of strengthening military families is accomplished by

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Schmitt, "Domestic Violence," Military Lifestyle Magazine, 1994, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon C. Zahn, "Sociological Impressions of the Chaplaincy. In Military Chaplains ed., Harry G. Cox, Jr., ed. Military Chaplains: From Religious Military to a Military Religion. New York: American

placing God back into the equation of relationships. As Albert Einstein suggested, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them."<sup>5</sup> When we understand the priority God places on the family and raise up the Biblical model, then the homes of sea service personnel all benefit.

The chaplain has not been adequately utilized in dealing with domestic violence issues in the military. And preventing violence in the Navy and Marine Corps means addressing the root causes of the problem. As such, there is no other professional within the chain-of-command more qualified to address the theological dimension of this problem, than the chaplain. This also makes the pastoral role in dealing with victims of abuse of utmost importance.

Domestic violence threatens the fabric of our entire society. Concern for the welfare of Navy families and the effects of domestic violence on military performance prompted the establishment of the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) in 1976. Today the FAP is designed to address the prevention, identification, reporting, intervention, treatment, and follow-up of domestic violence problems. As part of "taking care of our own" it is the Well being of his or her family members.

### Thesis

This project undertakes to assess the current problem of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps; it will offer suggestions and recommendations that the military can take to diminish the problem of family violence.

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Report Press, [1973], 77.

<sup>5</sup> Gary T. Weeden, "Strengthening the Home through Parenting." In The Navy Chaplain Journal Vol. 10, no. 3: 16.

### Definitions of Major Terms

To understand the dynamics of domestic violence prevention, the following terms are presented.

**Domestic violence:** Marie Fortune describes domestic violence as “behavior that is intentionally designed to injure another person. It is possible to hurt others in many different ways; we might want to do psychological injury, when we belittle, insult, or curse someone. We may even try to hurt or damage someone physically. In each case, our purpose is to injure, to inflict some form of pain.”<sup>6</sup> Whether the behavior is brought on by alcoholism or drug usage, or whether it is simply a learned behavior, the research varies widely.

**Batterer:** One who perpetuates violence against another, usually a male against a woman. Certain cultures have either encouraged violence against women or condoned it. Many states adopted policies, acknowledging “wife beating” as acceptable. The culture from which sea service personnel come from largely sets the stage for domestic violence. Violence against women by men is not a new problem in our society. The statistics are overwhelming and familiar, as certain cultures have either encouraged it or condoned it: while others have regulated it. Considering that women are the more frequent victims of serious violent attacks, they should be the focus of the most immediate treatment. On the other hand, failing to address the needs of the abusive male does little to prevent their continued use of violence with their partners.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 3.

<sup>7</sup> James J., Ponzetti, Jr., Rodney M. Cate, and James E. Koval, "Violence Between Couples: Profiling the Male Abuser. American Personnel and Guidance Journal 61, no. 4 (1982): 222.

External Factors: There are several factors researchers associate with domestic violence. These factors associated with the use of violence by men are not limited to the internal characteristics of these men. Certain factors external to the men and their intimate relationships also influence the likelihood that they may resort to violence. These external factors are as follow: (a) economic stress, (b) social isolation, and (c) cultural norms.<sup>8</sup>

Child physical abuse: child abuse is any intentional infliction of bodily harm to a child which results in major physical injury such as brain damage, skull or born fracture, sprain, internal injury, poisoning, scalding, severe cut, laceration, bruise, or any combination which constitutes a substantial risk to the life and well being of the individual. It also includes more minor physical injury such as twisting, shaking, minor cuts, bruises, or any combination, which does not constitute a substantial risk to the life or well being of the child. Some of the possible physical indicators include unexplained bruises or welts, unexplained burns, and injuries, which are not consistent with the age of the child. A child may also have behavioral indicators such as extreme aggressiveness, withdrawal, being frightened of others, or feeling that he or she deserves punishment.

Spouse physical abuse: Spouse abuse is direct physical injury, trauma, or emotional harm inflicted on a partner in a lawful marriage, and includes assault, battery, threats to injure or kill, other act of force or violence, and emotional maltreatment. Medical personnel are directed to pay particular attention to women who have injuries to their head, face, neck, chest, abdomen and arms. These are the most commonly abused areas of women.

Child emotional abuse: This abuse is caused by any act of commission such as

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<sup>8</sup> Ponzetti, Cate, and Koval 222-25.

continual degradation, disparaging, rejection, or threats of omission such as passive/aggressive inattention to a child's emotional needs on the part of the caretaker which causes low self-esteem in the child, undue fear or anxiety, or other damage to the child's emotional well-being. A child, who has a shallow, empty facial appearance, fails to thrive in a normal way, or lags in physical development may be showing physical signs of emotional abuse. Behavioral indicators include depression, poor self-image, developmentally delays, or habit disorders. Neglect or physical abuse is often manifested by tangible evidence. Emotional maltreatment is a much more difficult type of abuse to recognize.

Spouse emotional abuse: Spouse abuse can be just as over-whelming as physical abuse. Examples of emotional abuse include repeated harassment, interrogative questioning, put-downs, destruction of personal property, or deprivation of ID cards, car keys, and phones. It is important to realize that spouse abuse is considered to be the most unreported crime in America today. It is estimated that one out of every two marriages has experienced at least one episode of violence between spouses. Battering is the number one cause of injury to women, more frequent than muggings, automobile accidents, and rape combined.

Neglect: Another form of abuse is neglect. It is the deprivation of such necessities as nourishment, clothing, shelter, health care, education, and supervision. Some of the physical indicators of child neglect include poor growth patterns, poor hygiene, constant hunger, lack of supervision, and unattended medical problems. Behavioral indicators include inappropriate affection seeking, extended stays at school, avoidance of other children, constant fatigue, or extreme embarrassment around others.

Child sexual abuse: Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in any sexual act or situation, the purpose of which is to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator. All sexual activity between a caretaker and a child is considered sexual abuse. Physical indicators of sexual abuse include difficulty in walking or sitting, torn or stain underclothing, or diagnosis of a venereal disease. There is seldom physical evidence of child sexual abuse, which is why it is important to be able to recognize the behavioral indicators. Children who have sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge, who sexually act out with other children, and act out guilt in self-destructive ways all could be giving behavioral clues to when children actually report such abuse, remember that children very rarely lie about incidents of sexual abuse.

#### Work done previously in the Field

A lot of research deals with the problem of domestic violence. But much of the literature also maintains that domestic violence is a complex phenomenon. Consequently, effective intervention with abusive males in particular can be problematic. At present, so little is known about abusive relationships that the development of effective intervention strategies is greatly hampered. The literature reviewed basically suggested several areas that can be utilized by counselors as they work with families. The reviewed literature also suggested that counselors might focus their present interventions in two main areas: (a) reduction of stereotypical sex-role expectations of abusive males; and (b) training these males in effective interpersonal skills (self-disclosure, listening, assertiveness, etc.)

Marie M. Fortune, an expert in the field, maintains that violence in families has become an accepted tragedy in our society. It has been and continues to be viewed by most people as "normal," that is, just the way things are. The ideas and energy needed to



end this tolerance of violence in families are available if concerned people work together. She indicated that by refusing to acknowledge the problem--by refusing to accept responsibility for the conditions that condone the battering of spouses and elderly adults and the physical and sexual abuse of children--society allows such abuse to continue.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the research on the topic of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps has been compiled by the Navy's Family Advocacy Program. The Family Advocacy Program addresses prevention, identification, evaluation, intervention, treatment, follow-up, and reporting procedures of all cases of child physical abuse and neglect, child emotional abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse inside and outside of the family, and spouse physical abuse and emotional abuse.

The Family Advocacy Program has compiled much of its information on the topic of domestic violence from subjective sources, such as interviews and case studies. Since much of the program's attention is primarily focused on the victim of domestic violence, very little first-hand information about men who assault their partners is available. I will profile the male abuser, and offer suggestions that should prove to be beneficial in diminishing family violence in the Navy and Marine Corps.

A large number of journal articles can be found in the general category of domestic violence and, not surprisingly, these articles indicate the need for treatment strategies aimed at the abuser as well as the victim. In addition, many books are oriented specifically around the need for a better understanding of the male who batters.

In this article, "Violence Between Couples: Profiling the Male Abuser," authors

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<sup>9</sup> Marie M. Fortune, Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for Abused Women (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987), 83.

James J. Ponzetti, Jr., Rodney M. Cate, and James E. Koval recommends that both members in an abusive intimate relationship receive treatment in order to alleviate the cycle of violence in the family. They maintain that the majority of research and intervention at present, however, has been directed toward addressing the needs of women who are being abused, while their male partners are to some extent ignored. Considering that women are more frequently the victims of serious attacks, they should be the focus of the most immediate treatment. On the other hand, failing to address the needs of the abusive male does little to prevent their continued use of violence with their partners.<sup>10</sup> Much of the literature suggest that abused women often return to their partners, despite prior contact with a helping professional, and the abuse recurs. Thus, intervention strategies must be developed for helping abusive men to discontinue patterns associated with their use of violence toward their partners.

The conclusions of this article closely follow many of the conclusions in this project, mainly that domestic violence treatment and prevention in the Navy and Marine Corps is targeted for the victims while perpetrators are usually punished. There are no abuse prevention programs aimed at addressing the problem of domestic violence in the family before it happens. Literature that addresses the problem of domestic violence prevention in the Navy and Marine Corps is almost non-existent. Most domestic violence resources focuses on the domestic violence in the broader society, but the conclusions in this project will be different. Chaplains in the Navy and Marine Corps community are on the leading edge of taking care of service members and their families. As such, I believe they should be more involved in addressing the difficult problem of family violence.

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<sup>10</sup> Ponzetti, Cate, and Koval, 223.

### Scope and Limitations of the Project

The scope of the project is to examine the problem of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps. Some practical suggestions are offered to reduce the problem for the short term, and also proposed are long-term systematic changes. This project does not address the problem of youth violence or violence that occurs outside of the family context.

The ultimate objective of this project is to lay the groundwork for a program, which can be adapted as a church ministry that comprehensively addresses the dynamics of family violence. The method used in this project is to examine the current status of domestic violence treatment and intervention, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of programs in the field.

Although the purpose of this project is not to readdress the general problem of domestic violence in our society, some of the same issues and problems that hamper treatment in the Navy and Marine Corps or applicable to the broader society. At the very core of domestic violence crisis are the issues which allow members of our society to become either the victims, or perpetrators of domestic violence. Although, this project will not attempt to argue for or against the various theoretical models which attempt to explain domestic violence, such as the cultural, behavioral, or learning model, much of the literature suggest that children who are victims of abuse are more likely to become abusers themselves as adults.

Finally, this project suggests that when it comes to dealing with domestic violence issues in the Navy and Marine Corps, perhaps the most underutilized professional within the chain-of-command is the chaplain, one of the goals will be to demonstrate why and

how chaplains should play a greater role in domestic violence treatment and intervention.

Although domestic violence has become somewhat characteristic to our culture, the project hopes to demonstrate that the problem can be minimized and even controlled in the Navy and Marine Corps if the right strategies are employed. Domestic violence is unique in relation to other forms of violence precisely because many men seem to think that their spouses are property, and that they have a legal right to perpetuate violence against them. Some progress has been made in dealing with domestic violence in the military, but there is more work that can be done. The problem has not diminished primarily because ineffective strategies for counseling abusive males have not been employed.

#### Procedure for Integration

In order to provide support for the thesis it will be necessary to pursue some historical development within the treatment industry. Chapter 2 details the current state of affairs in the treatment industry. Chapter 3 looks at the ethical responsibility on the part of leadership in the Navy and Marine Corps to do more to diminish the problem of domestic violence in the sea services. Consequently, effective intervention strategies that focus on abusive males in the military should be part of the design.

The project also suggests that there is a theological component to the domestic violence issue, and that is presented in Chapter 4. This chapter provides theoretical and practical applications according to the biblical understanding of men and women, love and relationships. There are also some theological themes such as violence to the image of God. Dignity and the individual as a human being are also parts of this equation. These theological aspects to the domestic violence question will be addressed.

Chapter 4 advocates for the chaplain's role to be increased in dealing with domestic violence issues. Work in this field has typically been accomplished by individuals or professionals not directly associated with a religious organization, although there has been some involvement by individuals practicing the discipline of pastoral counseling. The intent is to demonstrate both a need and a method by which the chaplain can become more involved in caring for victims of abuse as well as the abuser. Hopefully, this project will broaden the perspective of the average chaplain or pastor, who is limited by the demands and time constraints of ministry, but who needs to be able to interact with this increasingly complex problem in our culture.

From the healing perspective, the family healing process bears a striking resemblance to the confession and reconciliation of atonement. Pastors, when properly equipped, could become the most effective facilitators of healing, considering the fact that they are still perceived as specialists in atonement.<sup>11</sup>

This project integrates material gathered from the author's own experience as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy, work with the Navy's Family Advocacy Program (a program which has the primary oversight of domestic violence cases in the Navy and Marine Corps), and experiences from personal involvement with treatment programs for battered women, during which I was able to gather first-hand information with regard to some of the problems these women face.

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<sup>11</sup> Nelson, S. T. Thayer, Spirituality and Pastoral Care, ed., Don S. Browning (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 78-80.

## Chapter 2

### Ethical Responsibilities

In this age of the media event, society is bombarded with movies that seem to glamorize violence. After all movies that feature violence-depicted-scenes make much more interesting viewing for the networks. When the President of the United States announced his “War on Violence” in 1994, he challenged Hollywood to do a better job of policing itself. There appears to be considerable agreement, at least on a theoretical level, that violence begets violence. This marked the same year that the Violence against Women Act was born.<sup>1</sup> Law enforcement agencies across the country have adjusted their budgets to reflect a heavy emphasis on processing domestic violence cases and reporting.

In this chapter, the intent is not to level a criticism at the movie industry or contemporary forms of entertainment, but to offer the possibility that attitudes are not always the result of direct impact. Individuals are influenced indirectly by the attitudes of others, and particularly by attitudes conveyed within the media and entertainment industries. The oversimplified characterizations of violence in films convey a lasting imagery, which is bound to effect individuals behavior in real-world situations and decisions. Many of our attitudes towards violence have been formed by the society in which we live.

As we approach the twenty-first century, we should reflect upon and celebrate the significant milestones and accomplishments of advocates who have raised the consciousness of our nation. The Violence Against women Act of 1994 and related

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<sup>1</sup> Ola W. Barnett, Cindy L. Miller-Perrin, and Robin D. Perrin, Family Violence across the Lifespan: An Introduction (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1997), 287.

provisions have proven extremely effective nationwide in curbing domestic violence offenses and providing protection and peace to victims and their families. Although the Navy has several official programs that are designed to help with the treatment of domestic violence, little is offered in the area of prevention. This chapter attempts to explain why the Navy has an ethical responsibility to do more to curb acts of domestic violence in the sea services. It also examines facts about domestic violence in our country and how the sea service can perhaps even collaborate with local communities in dealing with this problem. In addition, suggestions are provided for ways to enhance prevention programs based on history, norms, and morale issues surrounding domestic violence.

### The Big Picture of Domestic Violence

Historically, domestic violence has been a recurring phenomenon throughout our history. It has long been hidden behind the curtain of domestic privacy. Only recently have we become aware of its tragic consequences, both for the victims and for society as a whole. One of the greatest blocks to dealing with the widespread problem of domestic violence is the tacit acceptance and covering up of the crime. Down through the ages, someone has always been “settling” the matter by drawing the curtain, shutting out the public gaze, and deciding not to air a lot of dirty linen.

Wife beating has a history that has been deliberately denied documentation. The law has been condoning violence to wives for centuries. Why this is so is a matter for conjecture and evolving theories. A visit to the library however would produce no literature on the history of wife-beating per se. In Richard J. Gelles’ book, The Violent

Home, he characterized the lack of research as selective inattention.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the lack of documentation, there is a history. And when the history is uncovered, it comes as a cultural shock. Some of the nations we most respect as representing the highest civilization and some of the institutions we most revere as representing the highest spirituality come under indictment. As we consider our own nation's 200 years of growth and progress, it is a shock to read laws from the 1800s which regulated wife-beating: not criminalizing it, but permitted it. Expected it. Accepted it. Before 1871, a husband was able to go unpunished for "beating his wife with a stick, pulling her hair, choking her, spitting in her face, kicking her about the floor. Marital violence was his privilege. It was indeed an ancient privilege, which would be long honored.<sup>3</sup>

The first case decided in a United States court acknowledging the husband's right of "chastisement" occurred in 1824 in the Supreme Court of Mississippi. And the law, in this new democracy, would not allow the battered wife to "vex or discredit or shame" the family name by seeking legal protection or relief. Such was the status of married women in the fledging democracy, founded under God.

The "privilege" of wife beating is ancient indeed. In order to find a time in history when wife beaters did not enjoy having custom and the law on their side, it is necessary to go back more than 2000 years to pre-Christian times: even further than that, to pre-

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<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Gelles, The Violent Home: A study of Physical Aggression Between Husbands and Wives (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publication, 1974), 151-65

<sup>3</sup> Terry Davidson, "Wifebeating: A Recurring Phenomenon Throughout History," in Battered Women: A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence, ed. Maria Roy (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977), 3-7.



Biblical times.

Domestic violence is a societal problem. The men and women, who chose to make the Navy and Marine Corps a career, are products of the broader culture. Our culture is intrinsically linked to the problem of domestic violence. Recognizing domestic violence has not always been easy, even for the victims. This is because domestic violence is much more than physical abuse. In fact, many women who are controlled by their partners and who live in danger and fear have never been physically assaulted. In the early stages, the pattern of abuse is hard to regard. People in abuse relationships, however, consistently report that the abuse gets worse with time.<sup>4</sup>

In this country, a woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a male partner than by any other type of assailant. Domestic violence is believed to be the most common yet least reported crime in our nation. An estimated 3 to 4 million American women are beaten each year by their husbands or partners. The U.S. Surgeon General has identified domestic violence as a major health problem for women. Wife-beating results in more injuries that require medical treatment than rape, auto accidents, and muggings combined. Each year, more than 1,000 women--or about four women per day--are killed by their husbands or partners. Domestic violence is indeed a serious national problem that affects not only individual victims, but also the entire community.

Marie Fortune, editor of the book Violence in the Family, offered these facts:

Domestic violence occurs among all sectors of society. It happens to people of all racial, economic, and religious groups. People in the mostly white, upper class Washington, D. C. suburb of Montgomery County, Maryland, received as many domestic disturbance calls as were received in

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<sup>4</sup> R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, Violence against Wives (New York: Free Press, 1979), 137.

the same period in Harlem, New York. Low income battered women are more likely to seek assistance from public agencies, such as shelters and hospital emergency rooms, because they have fewer private resources than middle and upper-income women. They are therefore more likely to be counted in official reporting statistics.<sup>5</sup>

This is the culture from which our young people in the sea services come.

According to Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Mary S. Copeland, "Cultural values and attitudes towards women pervade not only the home but also society at large."<sup>6</sup>

Research on the causes of family violence reveal that exposure to violence during childhood, either directed at oneself or witnessing violence between parents and caretakers, is the most common risk factor associated with experiencing or perpetrating violence in one own adulthood.

#### The Problem With Treatment Programs

Traditionally treatment for domestic violence incidents has focused primarily on the victim. It is becoming increasingly apparent that violence between intimates is far more extensive than previously assumed.<sup>7</sup> Although accurate data are difficult to obtain, it is estimated that over 2 million husbands and an equivalent number of wives will experience severe violent acts from their partners in any given year. Violence between intimates however is not limited only to marital partners. Two recent investigations of premarital abuse found the following:

Over 20% of the respondents had been involved in one or more violent

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<sup>5</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 119.

<sup>6</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Mary S. Copeland, eds., Violence against Women (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 49.

<sup>7</sup> Dobash and Dobash, 137-40.

premarital relationships.<sup>8</sup>

It seems important that both members in an abusive relationship receive attention in order to alleviate violence. The majority of research and intervention at present, however, has been directed toward addressing the needs of women who are being abused, while their male partners are to some extent ignored. Considering that women are more frequently the victims of serious violent attacks, they should be the focus of the most immediate remedial treatment. On the other hand, failing to address the needs of the abusive male does little to prevent their continued use of violence with their partner. Abused women often return to their partners, despite prior contact with a helping professional, and the abuse recurs.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, even if the current violent relationship was dissolved it cannot be assumed that abusive men will not continue to resort to violence in their future intimate relationships. According to Murray A. Straus, "Most men who abuse their intimate partner had resorted to violence in a previous marital or cohabitating relationship." Thus intervention strategies must be developed for helping abusive men to discontinue patterns associated with their use of violence toward their partners.

Professionals are in an important position for assisting abusive males to become aware of their dysfunctional behavior and to facilitate the learning of skills needed for coping with stressful situations that precipitate violent behavior. In order to intervene effectively with these males, attention must be given to the characteristics that are related

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<sup>8</sup> Dobash and Dobash, 144.

<sup>9</sup> Murray A. Straus, "Wife Beating: How Common and Why?" Victimology: An International Journal 3 (1978): 443-58.

to their use of violence in intimate relationships. Accordingly, we present an integrative view of the literature on spousal violence as it relates to the abusive male. From this review, I will suggest various issues that need to be addressed before effective intervention with abusive males can proceed.

### Factors Associated With Violence By Males

As Richard J. Gelles suggests, internal multiple factors act together to create an environment conducive to the use of violence. To date, few studies have taken a multivariate perspective in analyzing these factors.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, it is difficult to determine how these factors, taken together, interrelate in promoting couple violence. There are, however, a number of factors that have frequently been identified as contributing to the use of violence by men in their intimate relationships. The likelihood that males will resort to violence appears to be enhanced by internal characteristics that they bring into their relationships, as well as pressures from the environment.

### Internal Factors

At present there is little first-hand information about men who assault their partners. Most of the data that have been collected on male abusers have been gathered through direct methods, such as interviewing the victimized woman or consulting social service professionals. Several studies based on clinical impressions integrate information from the men themselves. Only one study of male abusers has utilized standardized measures and adequate control groups.<sup>11</sup>

Although there is a definite need for further research on abusive males. Richard J.

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<sup>10</sup> Gelles, A Violent Home, 43-50.

Gelles identified five internal factors that have consistently emerged from the studies conducted. These factors:

- Learned predisposition toward violence.
- Alcohol and drug dependency.
- Inexpressiveness.
- Emotional dependence.
- Lack of assertiveness.<sup>12</sup>

From these five external factors, male violent behavior directed at their intimate partners has emerged. Murray A. Straus, Richard J. Gelles, and Susanne K. Steinmetz, in their book Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family, offers a good description of a learned predisposition toward violence:

Learned predisposition is] that individuals who either observe their parents abusing each other or who were abused as children are more likely than people from nonviolent homes to engage in or have a tolerant attitude toward the use of violence.<sup>13</sup>

Learned predisposition is a human condition that exacerbates the violent males' behavior the majority of men in abusive relationship come from families where abuse was prevalent. The family acts as a powerful socializing agent. An abusive family provides not only the initial setting for exposing its members to physical violence, but also sets the affective context and meaning toward the use of violence. Thus individuals who have

<sup>11</sup> Gelles, A Violent Home, 43-50.

<sup>12</sup> Gelles, A Violent Home, 57-59.

<sup>13</sup> Murray A. Straus, Richard J. Gelles, and Susanne K. Steinmetz, Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1980), 63.

experienced abuse in their childhood homes ultimately may model this behavior as adults, which supports an attitude that violence is an appropriate conflict resolution tactic.

We have come a long way in learning how we are effected by alcohol. Richard J. Gelles offers a brief synopsis on the role alcohol and drug dependency play in abusive male behavior:

[Alcohol and Drug Abuse] is to suggest that men who abuse their partners have often been found to have problems with substance abuse.<sup>14</sup>

Although some form of substance abuse is usually present in abusive relationships, this does not necessarily imply that such abuse is causing the violence. The use of alcohol and drugs is viewed as allowing by attributing the cause of his behavior to being intoxicated. Substance abuse and couple violence is related in that they both are indicative of the abuser's style for coping with stress. It is important to consider that helping the abuser to stop his use of alcohol or drugs will not necessarily directly affect his continued use of violence.

[Expressiveness is] the inability on the part of the abuser to express his emotions. It seems that abusive males have an especially hard time expressing their emotional feelings.<sup>15</sup>

It is generally accepted that men in American society are less likely to verbally express their emotions than women. This inexpressiveness is likely a result of men's socialization, where family, friends, and the mass media all serve to reinforce cultural patterns and expectations that men should be "strong and silent." Susan Schechter suggests that men use their inexpressiveness as a power strategy to maintain a position of

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<sup>14</sup> Gelles, A Violent Home, 41.

dominance within the family. For some men, if this inexpressiveness proves to be ineffective in maintaining their authority, then physical violence may be perceived as their only recourse.<sup>16</sup>

Emotional Dependence is usually very emotionally dependent on their intimate partner. This extreme sense of dependency tends to be exhibited through these men's intense feelings of jealousy and possessiveness of the partners. Although abusive males are not lacking in friends, they tend to view these relationships as non-gratifying. Perhaps when abusive males perceive a lack of support from friends and fear the possible loss of their intimate partners, they resort to violence as a means to keep their partner in the relationship.<sup>17</sup>

#### External Factors

As previously mentioned, factors associated with the use of violence by men are not limited to the internal characteristics of these men. Certain factors external to these men and their intimate relationships also influence the likelihood that they may resort to violence. These external factors are as follow:

- Emotional Stress.
- Isolation.
- Cultural Norms.

[Economic Stress is] stressors such as unemployment, underemployment,

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<sup>15</sup> Gelles, A Violent Home, 48.

<sup>16</sup> Susan Schechter, Women and Male Violence (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 40-47.

<sup>17</sup> Schechter, 40-47.

or high levels of job dissatisfaction.<sup>18</sup>

Establishing themselves as economically successful is an important criterion for adequate fulfillment of the role of husband and father. Any sense of financial insecurity may ultimately affect a man's self-confidence in his ability to satisfactorily perform as family breadwinner. Furthermore, the power of the husband is positively related to the amount of resources he accrues through his work. Consequently, when abusive males feel threatened in their role as provider and perceive themselves as powerless, they resort to violence as an alternative means for expressing their authority in the family.

Cultural Norms are commonly held by society. The impact of family socialization processes that legitimize the use of violence would be less profound if violence was not supported by cultural norms. The media, for instance, inundate individuals with the message that violence for a just cause is appropriate and expected behavior. Prevailing attitudes that view women as the property of husbands, although weakening, can become for many men a just cause for resorting to violence when these women seek to express their independence or self-identity.

The relationship between violence and the view of women as their husband's property has been described as promoting the marriage license as a "hitting license."<sup>19</sup> Marriage as a "hitting license" is supported not only by many abusive males, but also is evidenced in many other aspects of our society. The reluctance of the police to intervene in cases of domestic violence, clergymen encouraging the abused woman to be more

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<sup>18</sup> Ponzetti, Cate, and Koval, 223.

<sup>19</sup> Lenore E. Walker, The Battered Woman Syndrome (New York: Springer Publishing, 1984), 118.



tolerant of her husband, and human service workers who blame women for the violence all serve to ensure the continuation of a violent relationship.

### Domestic Violence in the Navy

One thing that is noticeable in the military communities is change in the family composition. Today's sea services consist of service members who are better educated, better trained, and have more life experiences. They also come from varied backgrounds, both traditional and non-traditional. Family structures consist of dual-career couples, single fathers, single mothers, inter-cultural marriages, blended families, and special need families. Regardless of marital status, or family composition, the commitment that the sea services have to families remains the same. Navy leaders have long recognized that family well-being influences mission readiness, as well as overall morale.

People are the foundation of the Navy and Marine Corps, and their families' needs are a high priority not only for them, but for the military leadership as well. The saying: "If the Navy wanted you to have a family, it would have issued you one" is no longer applicable. Although service members' commitment and obligation are still expected, the sea services have long recognized the need to maintain quality of life for families. This is evidenced on many military installations with increased family housing, child development centers, and other quality of life programs.

Before the Vietnam War, the United States Navy was primarily composed of single service members. Since that time, however, the number of married people in the military has increased tremendously. Single Marines and Sailors now share the scene with married families. Therefore, the development of programs to ensure recruitment and retention of a sufficient, well qualified military force must now take into account the marital status,

family circumstances, and types of household arrangements of our service personnel.

In 1980, the Navy had more single Sailors than family members. In 1997, there were three-times as many family members as active duty sailors. Over half of all active duty members are now married.

As a consequence of being in the military, sea service families must face difficult problems and challenges arising from prolonged periods of separation, frequent moves, assignments to remote posts, and other circumstances that clearly distinguishes military life from civilian life. Observation and mere common sense provide important clues and insights as to the distinctive features and problems of military families. They have also often provided the basis for the design and implementation of a wide range of family programs that may ameliorate difficult duty-related conditions, and affect recruitment and retention.

Serving in the military has its up side and down side. One thing is for certain; however, all sea service personnel will at some point go to sea. They will deploy from their original duty station. As such, deployment can put a tremendous strain on relationships. In addition to having to worry about the job ahead, the dangers involved and what will happen at home in your absence, service personnel now have a family to be concerned about. With an increase in stresses related to long periods of separation from families, and deployments certainly leads to an increase in domestic violence problems.

As it is with the rest of society, individuals also have been impacted by domestic violence in the sea services. Many of our personnel have had it hit close to home. While others have had their quality of life affected by the same. Although individuals in the military may not have been impacted immediately by a domestic violence incident, they

know of someone whose life has been impacted. And when individuals in the military are impacted, the same can be said about commands and units within the Navy and Marine Corps. Whatever the source, domestic violence has had its effect on every member of our contemporary society.

If individuals have experienced domestic violence within their families, they may have suffered the pain of watching lives disintegrate as they struggled for answers to imponderable questions. Some may be among the more fortunate ones who have only witnessed the impact of domestic violence from afar.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Navy has several programs that are designed to help with the treatment of domestic violence, a lot more needs to be done in the area of prevention. One such program that the Navy has is the Victim's Advocate Program, which is usually present at most Navy and Marine Corps installations. This chapter will also explain why the Navy has an ethical responsibility to provide not only domestic violence treatment programs but programs that outline prevention as well. It will also examine facts about domestic violence in our country and how the military can perhaps capitalize on some of the local community programs that are presently succeeding in reducing domestic violence.

#### Leadership's Ethical Requirement

Like the civilian world, the military is struggling to identify and deal with domestic violence. What numbers exist are often contradictory and measure different things. Still, all show that the rate of confirmed cases of domestic violence in military families has been growing. Actual numbers, however, do not always tell the real story. Particularly since

many military families live off base, cases of domestic violence are not always identified as such if handled by a civilian police. Off base, local police may or may not report the incident to base officials. Department of Defense officials are currently working to develop a memorandum of understanding with civilian law enforcement authorities to establish such reporting procedures. Commanding Officers must take a more active role in dealing with incidents of domestic violence.

Just as the military fought discrimination and drug and alcohol abuse in its ranks, Department of Defense is now turning its attention to domestic violence, another social ill that destroys families, scars children and ultimately affects military readiness. The "Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence is working to improve Department of Defense's response to this troubling issue within the military community. Concern for the welfare of Navy families and the effects of domestic violence on military performance prompted the establishment of the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) in 1976. Today the FAP is designed to address the prevention, identification, reporting, intervention, treatment, and follow-up of child and spouse maltreatment.

1. **Prevention.** Education and training programs, and FAP's support of The Return and Reunion Program are designed to address the stressors faced by military families and provide healthy means of resolving conflict.
2. **Identification and Reporting.** The Family Advocacy Program provides training to help professionals detect abuse. Incidents of abuse or neglect are reported to family advocacy representatives and coordinated with local child protective authorities.
3. **Intervention and Treatment.** A multidisciplinary team of family advocacy professionals and command representatives recommends an appropriate response to identify cases of abuse. The Navy's

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<sup>20</sup> Walker, 119-25.

intervention may include crisis intervention, emergency shelter, assessment, group counseling, rehabilitation, or treatment designed to prevent further violence, criminal prosecution, disciplinary or administrative sanctions, and close coordination with civilian social service providers. An incest treatment option is available for carefully screened offenders. All victims are entitled to physical and/or mental health treatment, counseling, and other support services.

4. **Case Management and Follow-Up.** Family Advocacy cases are monitored to ensure the victim is safe and the perpetrator is making progress. Case follow-up spans one year to allow time to resolve the immediate problem. Family support programs, the medical treatment facilities, and local commanders work cooperatively to provide Family Advocacy services. Families may obtain assistance with family problems, including family violence, by contacting a local Family Service Center, military hospital social worker, or mental health clinic found on the nearest Navy installation.<sup>21</sup>

Family advocacy is a leadership issue. As part of “taking care of our own” it is the responsibility of the military leadership to curtail this problem. Additionally, each member is expected to exemplify Navy and Marine Corps leadership core values of honor, courage and commitment. Child and spouse abuse in the military is unacceptable and incompatible with these high standards of professional and personal discipline.

### One Family's Nightmare

It was a night the Jones' family will never forget. A harsh exchange of words escalated into a physical confrontation. Sue had her nine-month-old daughter in her arms when Dave pushed her to the ground. Sue was taken to the hospital for emergency assistance because she suffered head injuries during her fall.

Dave kept expressing his remorse and promised Sue it would never happen again. Sue wanted to believe Dave because she did not want to believe the person she married

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<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Vauk, “The Navy’s Family Advocacy Program,” The Navy Chaplain Journal 6, no. 2 (1992), 31.

could harm her or their daughter. When the medical personnel started to probe the reason for the injuries Sue remembered something else Dave said: that if she told the truth, he would be kicked out of the Navy. Sue began rationalizing the incident. "Dave is just stressed from his job," she told herself. And he did promise it would never happen again. Unfortunately, perpetrators of domestic violence rarely keep promises of nonviolence without help from trained professionals.

Family violence is widespread in America. The above scenario probably sounds familiar because most chaplains have read or dealt with incidents of child and spouse abuse. And most chaplains have asked themselves the questions: What is the Navy's policy on family violence? What is a chaplain's role in family violence cases? How are cases processed through the system? How can these violent crimes be prevented?

Family violence is a social issue, which also concerns the Department of the Navy. The concern for this problem and its impact on the Navy and Marine Corps communities led to the implementation of the Family Advocacy Program. The Family Advocacy Program was developed with the following objectives: to prevent child abuse and spouse abuse, to intervene effectively when incidents occur, and to promote healthy family life. The Family Advocacy Program addresses prevention, identification, evaluation, intervention, treatment, follow-up, and reporting procedures of all cases of child physical abuse and neglect, child emotional abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse inside and outside of the family, and spouse physical and emotional abuse.

The Family Advocacy Program came into existence during the early 1970's when increased awareness of child maltreatment prompted the Navy Surgeon General to advocate a program dealing with both the medial and social aspects of the program. In

1976, the Child Advocacy Program was established within the Navy Medical Department for dependent children who were abused or neglected. In 1979, this program was expanded to include spouse abuse, sexual assault, rape, and was redesignated as the Family Advocacy Program. Family Advocacy Programs reflect the conviction that individuals are accountable for their behavior and are capable of changes.

The Navy and Marine Corps communities' position is that family violence and neglect detract from military performance, the effective functioning of military units and can diminish the reputation and prestige of military service. It is incompatible with the high standards of professional and personal discipline required of members of the sea services.

#### Extent of the Problem

The statistics on child and spouse abuse are alarming. It is estimated that in the United States close to two million American women experience abusive episodes each year. When we narrow the statistics down to the United States Navy, we get a better look at how our Navy families are impacted. The following information should shed light on the magnitude of the problem.

During FY 1991, there were 4,997 reported cases of child abuse; 2,047 of the cases were substantiated. As a result of child abuse, six children died in the Navy community. There were 5,605 reported cases of spouse abuse during FY 1991; 3,843 cases were substantiated. As a result of spouse abuse, five spouses died. The Navy statistics represent only the cases, which were reported.<sup>22</sup>

The incidents represent enormous damage to individuals, to families, to our military community, and to society. The damage caused by abuse and neglect includes the

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<sup>22</sup> Vauk, 29.

following:

- Deaths, physical injuries: These include permanent impairment or disfigurement.
- In addition to the intended victim, sometimes other family members, bystanders, and people who try to intervene are harmed.
- Emotional scars. Victim and abuser have low self-esteem. Victims may be depressed and unable to trust others.
- Break-up of families. This brings additional loss, additional trauma, and additional scars to both victim and abuser.
- Social problems. Delinquency, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and impaired work and school performances are associated with abuse/neglect.
- Consumption of financial, medical, legal and other resources.
- Ongoing cycle. Children carry the terrible lessons of violence and neglect with them into adulthood. The cycle is perpetuated through generations unless it is broken with appropriate services.<sup>23</sup>

### Summary

The tightrope strung by the Constitution's First Amendment between "free exercise" of religion and freedom from an established religion has always been a challenge to the Navy's leadership. In the present attempt to clarify and reinforce moral principles through the "Core Values" training program, references to religious values are totally absent. The program's architect listed a host of reasons to justify the "Core Values" course as part of Navy education and training. The enumeration includes concerns for wanting patriotism, absence of personal commitment, self-destructive lifestyles and ill-defined family structures. There is clearly an intentional omission of religious values and any mention of a higher power as a reference point for morality in the program's



presentation.

More than ever before, young Americans are looking for meaning and purpose to their lives, and to which they can dedicate their efforts. They want to be challenged to develop character, and to demonstrate self-sacrifice in making our world a better place. The ideals of the sea service appeal to many young people. Our affirmation of ethical behavior and Core Values set a standard that young Americans can believe in. As such, it is the responsibility of the Navy and Marine Corps leadership to endure that our reality matches our ideals.

Our young men and women in the sea services are unique in many ways. They are among some of the youngest and the brightest that society has to offer. Yet because they are so young, in many instance they simply lack the moral reasoning to make correct and right choices. I believe that is why the Navy leadership implemented the “Core Values” program. But I surmise that any training that speaks to the issue of character and morality should include the chaplain. I would certainly hope that even in an organization like the Navy, religious values would be of value to the discussion of morality.

Although the Navy has many programs that are designed to address the issue of domestic violence in the sea services, our young people deserve and need training and education at every level, both technical and psychological. They also need and deserve spiritual training. Training need to be geared to teaching and developing ethical consciousness instead of dictating values. Without these foundations, the foundations, the framework will steadily break down and moral values will soon become a low priority.

Our young men and women want to do the right things for their families and their

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<sup>23</sup> Jennifer Vauk, 29.

military careers. They simply need the necessary tools that will enable them to make right choices, the right decisions. The military makes for a stressful environment for our sea services personnel. Often it is this unprocessed stress that causes young men and women to act out in a violent manner. Domestic violence prevention must be a high priority for the sea service leadership

The Navy acted expeditiously when discrimination in the military adversely affected both morale and command readiness. The Navy leadership needs to respond in a similar fashion in dealing with domestic violence. Just as the military took the lead in dealing with racial issues within our ranks, it needs to take the lead in dealing with violence in the sea services. Domestic violence prevention must become a high priority. The sea service leadership has an ethical responsibility to its personnel to aggressively do more to ameliorate domestic violence from its ranks.

Any effective prevention program that the sea services have to address domestic violence must not just be concerned about the need of the victim but it must also address the needs of the male abuser as well. Abusive males in the military should be apart of any formulated strategy designed to diminish the domestic violence in the military.

## CHAPTER 3

### Sociological Implications

There is no doubt that violence in our nation has dramatically increased among children. This dramatic increase is evident in every community; from urban areas to rural and more affluent communities. Adolescence appears to be characterized by a much higher rate of both perpetration and victimization of violence than other years. A nationwide study of adolescent girls reveals that 12 percent had been beaten and 9 percent had been raped.”<sup>1</sup>

Developmental and social-environmental factors must be considered when attempting to explore the elevated risk of violence found among U.S. adolescents today. By all accounts the modal age for involvement in serious and lethal injuries has decreased over time. However, by most accounts firearm mortality rates particularly urban youth continue to rise.

A 1994 report by the Center for Disease Control gives the following facts:

From 1985 to 1991 the homicide and non-negligent manslaughter rates for males between the ages of 15 and 19 increased by 127%. By 1991 males of these ages were more likely to be arrested for murder than males in any other 5-year age group.<sup>2</sup>

A report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention produced basically similar results:

Juvenile victimization rates for 1992 increased by nearly 14 per 1,000.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Lystad, ed., Violence in the Home: Interdisciplinary Prospective (New York: Brunner/Mazel 1986), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Darnell F. Hawkins. A Report on Ethnicity, Race, Class and Adolescent Violence, Boulder, Col.: The Colorado University Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1996. 77.

For juveniles (12-17) and young adults (18-24) the statistic was nearly twice the victimization rate for 25 to 34 years old, and was five times the rate for those over 35.<sup>3</sup>

### Group and Community Differences

There are many reasons why violence and crime occurs. Nevertheless, a significant portion of these crimes and violence can be traced, at least partly, to unpleasant conditions in the community. In our society poverty is extremely unpleasant for many people. Their lack of money keeps them from enjoying many of the good things in life that Americans generally want, and sometimes even makes it difficult to obtain necessities such as adequate food and housing.

Not surprisingly, then, there is a positive relationship between poverty and homicide rates; the poorest metropolitan areas in the United States tend to have the greatest number of homicides relative to the overall general population.

As noted by Peter Benson, Judy Galbraith and Pamela Espeland, if we examine the ages at which children and youth begin to display serious violent behavior, we can early identify two distinct pathways. Children who demonstrate noncompliance and violent behavior very early in their development represent the first and most serious pathway. For many of these children, violence becomes a relatively stable behavioral response between 4 and 9 years of age. There also exists a higher probability that these individuals will continue their violent behaviors well into adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

The second pathway, involving the greater number of youth is characterized by

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<sup>3</sup> Hawkins, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Benson, Judy Galbraith, and Pamela Espeland, What Kids Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Raise Good Kids. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1995), 95.

time-limited violence displayed during adolescence. Unfortunately violent behavior is relatively common among adolescents. Estimates suggest the following:

Between 20 and 40% of the males and 4-15% of females report participating in one or more serious acts of violence. Typically, youth begin to initiate the violent behaviors following 12 years of age with the highest risk for initiation between 15 and 16 years of age. Participation in violent behavior for the vast majority of these youth, however, drops dramatically after age 17. Thus, for the most of these youth, violent acts represent a behavioral repertoire that begins and ends within the adolescent years.<sup>5</sup>

Several studies have looked at the ethnic breakdown of youth that commit violent crimes in America. While there is a lot of speculation one way or the other, there is conclusive evidence that ethnicity plays a major role in violent crime. The Uniform Crime Report, for example, has consistently indicated that African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are substantially over represented among those arrested for acts of interpersonal violence in the United States. The Supplemental Homicide Report suggested the following statistical information:

[African Americans] constituted nearly 61% of all adolescents (10-20 years of age) known to have committed murder in 1990. Firearm death rates for black males aged 15-19 in the United States in 1989 ranges from 15.5 per 100,000 for those residing in the central cities. Comparable rates for white males were 3.0 and 21.5 respectively. Non firearm rates for males showed a similar geographical and racial pattern, as did rates for females of both races.

[Hispanic Americans] between the ages of 15 and 24 were shown to have a homicide victimization rate of 97.3 per 100,000 as compared to 185.1 for African American and 10.0 for Anglo whites.

[Among Native Americans] little is known about the distribution of homicide among adolescents who are Native American or who belong to the diverse ethnic groups that constitute Asian and Hispanic racial

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<sup>5</sup> Hawkins, 77.

categories.<sup>6</sup>

Self-report studies have suggested that racial differences in rates of involvement in violence are smaller than those indicated by the UCR. Further, these differences may be less pronounced for adolescent involvement in non-lethal aggression than for adolescent involvement in homicide. Such studies have also reported that as black and white adolescents age into early adulthood, the black-white gap widens rather than narrows.

By most literary accounts, however, in the United States today, African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics are much more likely to be victims and perpetrators of lethal violence than are people of European or Asian ancestry. Substantial evidence also exists to support the accuracy of the belief that higher rates of lethal aggression are found among the economically marginal than among the more economically privileged sectors of all ethnic and racial groups.

The available evidence is inconclusive with regard to whether substantial and significant race and class differences exist in the rate of involvement in non-lethal forms of violence. Class, race, and ethnic bias still exist in the way that violence is conceptualized by researchers and the public and in the way that the criminal law is formulated and enforced.

We are aware that youth violence occurs for many reasons. No two youths commit violence for the exact same reasons. Many informal and formal studies have been done to try to determine why it does occur. Common issues that frequently surface is lack of parental supervision, drug involvement, and gangs and boredom. Youth often retaliate after they are victims of violence.

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<sup>6</sup> Hawkins, 77.

But, whether the statistics are accurate or not is not of major concern. One thing worth noting is this is the culture from which our young men and women in the sea services have come. These are the Sailors and Marines who are ultimately responsible for the security on this nation. They are the ones on whom we depend to fly the most sophisticated airplanes in the world, command the most technologically advanced ships ever to sail our major seas and oceans, and to fight our nation's wars. I am convinced that all of us, whether civilian or military, should be concerned.

### Media Influence

I want to go one record that while I personally believe that television and/ or forms of media entertainment play a significant role in perpetuating violence in our society, I am certainly not the expert with regard to this matter--and I certainly do not want to be found guilty of media bashing. A truly impressive body of research material, however, testifies to the violence-enhancing effects of media violence. To cite an example, Ross D. Parke observed the behavior of juvenile delinquents in a reformatory and published his findings. After exposing the juveniles to a special week of Hollywood movies, he noticed that the teenagers who saw a series of violent films exhibited a greater increase in their violent interactions with their peers, both during and after the movie week, than did the boys who watched equally interesting nonviolent movies.<sup>7</sup>

Parke is not alone in suggesting that there just might be a correlation between media violence and juvenile behavior. Very similar results were reported following a showing of a movie in New York. A group of young anti-crime crusaders picketed a

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<sup>7</sup> Ross D. Parke, Some Effects of Violent and Nonviolent Movies On the Behavior of Juvenile Delinquents (New York: Free Press, 1981), 77-89.

Time's Square theater showing the film "The Warriors," charging that the movie glorifies youth gangs and provoked violence. The film that portrays gang and warfare in New York City has been linked to at least three incidents of violence, including two fatal attacks in California.

To further complicate the picture, in New York City 12 youths also terrorized and assaulted subway passengers in the theater district after viewing the film. They jumped turnstiles and harassed terrified bystanders before they were subdued by police.<sup>8</sup>

The anti-crime crusaders mentioned in this report had every reason to be concerned about the modeling influences produced by violent films such as the Warriors. Rapidly growing research literature attests to the adverse effects of violence portrayed in the mass media. The depiction of people fighting, beating each other up, and killing one another, increases the chances that at least a few people in the audience will also behave violently themselves.<sup>9</sup>

I should point out however, that this media effect doesn't arise only because of violent modeling. The violent modeling influence I have been discussing essentially involves information transmission. That is, the observers have learned from the model's conduct how they themselves should act in certain ambiguous situations.

Early in 1991, a free-lance journalist interviewed the members of a street gang in one of the toughest sections of New York City. Among other things, they talked about violence on television. The gang leader, a teenager nicknamed "Savage," explained why

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<sup>8</sup> Parke, 95-101.

<sup>9</sup> Parke, 95-101.



he liked a particular series then being telecast by one of the local stations. "It's the action," he said. "A lot of shooting. Killing. Pushing people off roofs. I like violence."

The gang leader did not like to see rape portrayed on television, however. He claimed it gave many guys the wrong ideas. "They go out and do it just for the hell of it," he said. Without knowing the concept, "Savage" was clearly referring to a priming effect here. In talking about how guys got ideas from what they saw on television, he noted that violent scenes on the screen often activated similar thoughts and feelings in at least some people in the audience.<sup>10</sup>

### Youth Violence

Television violence is big business. It sells tickets at the movie theaters. But the residual effect of all this violence, is what appears to be a new phenomenon among our youth--is kids killing kids. Violent behavior, typically, includes serious and extreme behavior that is intended to cause physical harm to another person or property. Violence, on the other hand, refers to behavior that is less extreme. Violence can be physical or verbal in nature, and is intended to cause physical, psychological, or emotional harm.

Violence perpetrated by and towards children has demonstrated an alarming increase. This is especially true for our nation's teenagers. Moreover, the lethality of this violence has shown a drastic increase most recently. No so long ago the biggest problem kids faced was getting a flat tire on their bikes or having a mean teacher assign homework over the weekend. How times have changed. Who would have suggested that one of the perennial stories of 1998 would be kids killing kids?

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<sup>10</sup> Parke, 95-191

Gun shots in Oregon and Arkansas, however, once again remind us that we are living in a different world. As our nation mourned, the final count from these tragedies was four little girls, a teenage boy, two parents, and a brave, dedicated teacher who put herself in mortal danger to shield the body of a fifth child. The hail of bullets comes from kids sometimes as young as 11 years old.

In the past when we talked about kids killing kids it was in an urban setting. Los Angeles gangland battles between the Bloods and the Crips reminded us that life in the inner city was hard and ruthless. But the latest battlegrounds have not been Watts, or the Bronx. The violent confrontations have taken place in rural, idyllic towns with names like Pearl, Mississippi or Paducah, Kentucky or Jonesboro, Arkansas.

We are shocked and surprised. We open our newspapers to see the faces of Opie and Beaver look-alike charged with five counts of murder, and we shake our heads. But should we be surprised? Do we really believe that children can see thousands of TV murders or play violent computer games and not be tempted to act out the violence in real life? Most of the available, though limited, literature suggests not. This youth violence occurs sometimes right in our own neighborhoods.

These newspaper articles cited are but indicators that youth violence knows no boundaries: Oceanside, California, --San Diego Union Tribune. "Man confesses to death of 9 year-old." It was on his face, a simple, declarative speech, "I'm guilty. I did it." Brandon Wilson calmly uttered those five words in front of a judge, a prosecutor, his own defense lawyer and more than a dozen news cameras in a Vista, California courtroom. The man arrested in the slashing death of 9 year-old Matthew Cecchi in an Oceanside bathroom had confessed in the most public way possible. He was just 20 years old

himself.

Wilson was charged with murdering Matthew on the evening of November 14, 1999. The victim, who was attending a family get-together at the beach, had to use a public restroom just before 8 p.m., escorted by his aunt who waited outside. Minutes after he entered, a man emerged and said to the aunt, "I could do the same to you." The aunt would later discover Matthew's body in a pool of blood on the restroom floor.

Wilson was arrested two days later after he attacked a woman on a Los Angeles street. He confessed to police that he had killed Matthew. And he repeated a variant of that confession in court two days later.<sup>11</sup>

### The Affect of Youth Violence

Who is affected by youth violence? In one word I can explain who is affected by youth violence---everyone! That includes you, your children, your children's friends, your friends, your family, and your peers. No one is excluded by youth violence. In fact the youth violence phenomenon has spilled over into our schools. A 1993 National Household Education Survey, conducted for the Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics, found:

About one-quarter of students in grades 6-12 worried about becoming victims of crime or threats at school, and at least one in eight students were victimized at school.<sup>12</sup>

In the year since President Clinton signed the Gun-Free Schools Act to curb violence, states are taking decisive action to get guns out of schools. The Gun-Free

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<sup>11</sup> Roberta Kim, "Man Convicted of Boy's Murder," San Diego Tribune, 14 November 1999, A1.

<sup>12</sup> Mark A. Peterson, and Harriet B. Braiker, Who Commits Crimes: A Survey of Prison Inmates (Cambridge, Mass: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hair, 1981), 37.

Schools Act was passed in direct response to concerns reflected in several recent surveys.

For example, a Center for Disease Control, 1995 survey revealed:

In the month preceding the survey, more than one in 10 students between 1992 and 1994, two-thirds of the 105 fatal injuries to students, teachers and community members took place within the school boundaries, 29 percent in the school building and 37 percent outdoors on school property. Most incidents, 75 percent, involved the use of firearms. Many school districts now have adopted some version of a zero tolerance gun policy.<sup>13</sup>

Domestic violence, like gang violence, was once thought to be an urban problem exclusively. We have since learned, however, that assumption is not accurate to say the least, as we realize that the gang culture is not simply a problem of drug culture, a class culture, or race culture. Nor is violence simply a problem of gangs. As we settle for band-aid solutions to the problem of violence in the United States, we are increasingly brought face to face with the reality that while youth bear the most striking symptoms of a culture of violence, we cannot scapegoat the children. We cannot simply say that this is a problem of "youth culture." Our children, being the most vulnerable in this national family, bear the symptoms of a dysfunctional, violent adult society.

Throughout our history children have been the victims and not the perpetrators of violence, but it has been only in recent years that this phenomena has attracted the attention of mental health professionals and others. Unfortunately, the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children continue to be an extensive problem. Yet, most social theorists maintain that there is a direct relationship between child abuse and alcoholism and chemical abuse in our society. Child abuse perpetuates a vicious cycle that often leads to

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<sup>13</sup> Peterson and Braiker, 45.

some form of domestic violence in the outer years.<sup>14</sup>

Marty Seligman completed one of the earliest studies that addressed the issue of child abuse, as it related to chemical abuse in 1964. Although it was not an empirical study, analysis of 300 families who had been referred for protective services revealed that alcohol abuse was a primary problem in 62% of the cases. 41% of the fathers and 10% of the mothers of abused children used alcohol abusively. A much higher proportion of the mothers were found to have an alcohol problem. In his report, 40% of the mothers who abused their children were found to have an alcohol problem. Sexual abuse and incest have also pointed to a positive relationship between the exploitation of children and substance abuse.<sup>15</sup>

Statistics provided by an American Humane Association report in 1985 indicated that from the study of 665 validated cases of father-daughter incest (1975-1978), it found that Alcohol dependence existed in 27.6% of the cases, and drug dependence existed in an additional 4% of the cases. It was found that 100% of the stepfathers involved in cases of sexual abuse were under the influence of alcohol.<sup>16</sup>

The study by Elizabeth Wilson upon analysis of 521 cases, found that the typical perpetrator of child abuse or neglect would be the mother who would be of low income (having less than \$10,000 per year); (b) if using drugs, would use alcohol; and (c) would physically or emotionally neglect the victim. Another significant finding related to the

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<sup>14</sup> Howard Dubowitz, "Neglecting the Neglect of Neglect." Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 9 (1994): 555-60.

<sup>15</sup> Martin E. P. Seligman, Helplessness (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman Publishing, 1975), 107-12.

<sup>16</sup> American Association for Protecting Children, Highlights of Official Child Neglect and Abuse

fathers in the study was that the fathers tended to be abusive rather than neglectful. The fathers were similar to the mothers in their abuse of a substance; however, they also tended to abuse alcohol.

The most frequent type of child abuse case was physical injury, accounting for approximately 40%; followed by neglect, which make up 32% of the cases. About 15% involved sexual abuse. There are two types of physical injuries, major and minor. Major injuries include brain damage, bone fractures, internal injuries, poisoning, severe cuts, burns and scalding. Minor injuries include cuts, bruises, and twisting and shaking incidents.<sup>17</sup>

Neglect is more properly referred to as deprivation of necessities. Such cases involve depriving a child of suitable clothing or nourishment, not providing appropriate shelter or health care and failure to supervise a child properly and see that the child goes to school.

Except for the study by Elizabeth Wilson, the literature is limited with regard to such factors as the relationship of the child abuser to the victim. Other factors lacking in the literature are: services provided to the families and the plans for the children; that is, substitute care or in-home care with supervision. These factors, which were also examined in the study, are important because they represent the methods used to treat the family problems and prevent further abuse of children.

In reviewing statistics in one southern state for a six-month period, Martin found:

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Reporting (Denver, Col.: American Humane Association, 1985), 46-60.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, "Battered Wives: A Social Worker's Viewpoint," Royal Society of Health Journal 95, no. 6 (1975): 294-97.

Although an alcohol or drug problem existed for 365 cases, there were only 48 referrals for substance abuse counseling. Such finds could mean that there is still stigma attached to being an alcoholic. Many persons continue to resist working with and accepting the alcoholic as a person in need of help, a person capable of changing. The philosophy of many social services is to try to maintain the family unit almost at all cost. But there seems to be evidence, which supports the theory that children are frequently removed from the family, if the abuser is a substance abuser. The negative attitude toward alcoholics, and consequently all substance abusers, appears to be valid. Which means that social workers tend to assume a more punitive approach, that is, removal of the children from the nuclear family if the perpetrator is a user. The fact is that two populations of direct-service providers tend to get involved to prevent and treat substance and child abuse: addiction counselors and child protective services workers.<sup>18</sup>

The role of addiction counselors may vary depending on the functions of the agency, but normally the role includes providing counseling or referral services through individual, family, or group counseling methods. The role of the child protective services worker is defined by law and by the Department of Social Services policy. It is the responsibility of the child protective services worker to respond within 24 hours to any report of child abuse, neglect or abandonment. An investigation of the report must be made through contacts with the family and collaborative services. The investigation must determine within 60 days whether the abuse or neglect was indicated (substantial evidence existed to verify the report) or substantiated. The child protective services worker is also responsible for providing casework counseling to the family and for referring the family members to any other services deemed appropriated by the worker.

It appears that most studies in this particular area of concern tend to suggest that perpetrators of child abuse and neglect are often the natural parents of the victims.

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<sup>18</sup> Del Martin, Battered Wives (San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1978), 137.

Mothers are named as primary perpetrators most frequently, which is probably reflective of the following:

Mothers are still viewed by the community as the major caretaker of children, and there are many single-parent families in which child abuse and neglect occurs. Regardless of family size, there tends to be only one victim of abuse or neglect. It has been recognized that one child who may be different, (e.g., handicapped) is often the victim. In other cases, one child may be the scapegoat due to his or her own personality traits (e.g., a child who reminds the mother of the alcoholic father).<sup>19</sup>

A higher percentage of the child abusers tend to be from low educational levels. It is proposed that this condition create fewer job opportunities and consequently lower economic levels. These factors can add stress to the family unit, especially in times of high unemployment. Stress and crisis can precipitate substance abuse, and child abuse or neglect. A majority of the child abusers were in their mid-life years. It is usually during this period that individuals begin to assess themselves, their successes and failures. During this developmental stage, stagnation may occur. The feeling of personal impoverishment may result in individuals beginning to indulge themselves as if they were their own--or one another's--only child.<sup>20</sup>

Although many child abusers are identified as substance abusers, unfortunately very few are referred for substance abuse services for treatment. More often than not, many substance abusers are misdirected and referred to mental health services, rather than substance abuse services. This occurs because there still perhaps seems to be a gap in counseling services being provided and offered to substance abusers. Another factor may

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<sup>19</sup> Del Martin, 137.

<sup>20</sup> Del Martin, 137-47.



just be the attitude of the child protective services culture. If he or she feels that the user is a hopeless case, and not treatable, the referral for services could be viewed as a futile effort.<sup>21</sup>

Most literature seems to suggest that children, who were victims of abuse, will eventually grow up to be abusers themselves. If the majority of the parents were seriously listened to when speaking in political arenas about children exposure to violence, would our world look different? If concerned parents were to set the agenda regarding violence in society, would our children be safer or would parents find themselves on two sides of the issue regarding violence in music, video games, movies, television, and gun-control? Part of the problem may be parents. Are we waving and shouting in a soundproof room? Are we moving three steps forward and two steps back? All of the above? Why aren't things getting better? I suggest that we must start with first, breaking the vicious cycle of violence by providing the appropriate treatment to persons who genuinely need it.

This chapter will not focus much attention on the family, but we cannot talk about problems that effect our youth without first alluding to the family. Many young people are nothing more than victims of their environment. During my career as a chaplain, I often saw Sailors and Marines who were the products of troubled families. One situation was so bad that when a Sailor on board my ship received notification that his brother had died, he didn't even want to go home. In an effort to protect myself, I had him sign a document that stated that I had informed him of the death, and secondly, he had refused to exercise his "emergency leave" option.

All families have troubles. Life brings a share of misery and pain to all of us. For

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<sup>21</sup> Del Martin, 137-47.

All families have troubles. Life brings a share of misery and pain to all of us. For some families, however, troubles are occasional events, something to be dealt with. When no distressing issue is at hand, the family is not troubled, and life goes on well. Other families, however, are troubled even when there is no particular distressing event--being troubled is part of the day-in and day-out business of living. These are troubled families. Yet, these are the types of families that many of our sea service person joins the military to escape. They join the military that they can carve out a new identity for themselves.

During my career, I have been fortunate enough to witness the successful development of Marines and Sailors who joined the military primarily to get away from home. The implications of domestic violence in families, however, are so devastating--many victims of violence never are able to surmount the problem. For many Commanding Officers this minority group become a thorn in his or her side. If they are not problematic by alcohol abuse, then it's something else. Many of them turn to alcohol in an effort to drink away their pain, or drown in their own tears.

The military probably has a better track record than does the civilian community when it comes to turning many troubled youth around. Much of this success can be contributed to the discipline that they receive when they join the military. The other reason perhaps has to do with the "indoctrination" process military personnel are subjected to early on in their career. In the military, certain behaviors will simply not be tolerated. If you've got a problem, "go to see the chaplain."

Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin, in their book Family Violence across the Lifespan, suggest there is a correlation between domestic violence and homelessness among our nation's youth of all things. According to them domestic violence is a

contributing factor to homelessness.<sup>22</sup> When a young woman or young boy leave an abusive home, he or she often has nowhere to go. This is particularly true of women with few resources. Lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for assisted housing mean that many of these young people are forced to choose between abuse at home and the streets. Moreover, shelters are frequently filled to capacity and must turn away many of these persons. Many young men and women in the military, were faced with the choice of enlisting in the military, or living on the streets.

Domestic violence is also a drain on the welfare system. Literature further suggests that a sizeable portion of the welfare population experienced domestic violence at some point in time. Many welfare recipients is also at risk of homelessness or continued violence as well. A small percentage of the victims of domestic violence will chose to go back into the abusive situation rather than remain on the streets and homeless. Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin wrote:

Homelessness and welfare costs are another cost of battering. Domestic violence is the main reason for homelessness among women and children. A 1988 study funded by Victim Services identified 215 of the homeless as battered women. In 1992, Senator Roy Goodman of the New York State Committee on Investigations and Taxation, and Governmental Operations estimated that New York State spends \$30 to \$40 million annually to house homeless women.<sup>23</sup>

There are several studies of the family background of teenagers who show up at drug treatment centers and drop-in centers around the country. Most report a history of abusive family behavior. The typical home pattern reported for teenage girls who enter

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<sup>22</sup> Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin, 192-93.

<sup>23</sup> Barnett, Miller-Perrin, and Perrin, 192.

into prostitution and pornography industry is one filled with physical, psychological, and sexual violence. What should awaken all of us is that acts of domestic violence are carried out by the very people who should be making sure that their loved ones are safe and secure. This is a chilling thought, but we should realize that something could be done to turn the tide and end the violence.

What happens when Captain Jones beats his wife and neighbors call the police? Or when Sergeant Smith's wife clobbers him with a baseball bat? On base, military police will investigate and immediately notify Family Advocacy Program officials and the service member's commander. The truth is, domestic violence happens in the military of all ranks and ages. In addition to running the risk of shortening a military career, domestic violence in the military adversely affects young men and women in the sea service the same as it did at home. The authority and close supervision of leaders in the military has many parallels with parenting. Most young sea service personnel are still teenagers. Since young people tend to follow adult's leadership and role modeling, it logically follows that if leadership would show responsibility in the way they handle problems and difficulties in their lives, fewer young people would develop aggressive personalities in their relationships. Because young people are looking for impressionable role models to emulate, it is necessary for leadership to present the right kind image to young sea service personnel.

### Summary

The sociological implications of domestic violence are enormous. The culture from which our sea service personnel come, largely sets the stage for domestic violence. Young people are not only victims of violence in our society, but they are also perpetrators of violence at an alarming rate. Violence, murder, and theft have become

commonplace among today's youth. When I was a youth, yelling matches, throwing rocks at each other, and possibly good old fist fighting would usually settle an argument.

Today, if kids become angry with each other or want something the other has (such as a pair of tennis shoes), they pull out a gun and shoot to kill.

The "stuff" that some of our young people bring with them into the sea services is almost unbelievable. Why our young people turn the corner from playing basketball, skipping rope, and other yard games, to running in gangs, doing drugs, killing and terrorizing neighborhoods, is a mystery. Many experts, however, are saying that much of the blame stems from the breakdown in families, and the lack of values. The hurts of the past have scarred a whole generation's values. The hopes for their future may rest on the repairs we make in those values today. Chaplains, pastors, teachers, etc., all have the responsibility to change this tide, and teach the value of life and basic respect for human beings to our nation's youth.

As a chaplain in the Navy, I have served in commands where physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse were prevalent counseling themes in my office. Unlike our clergy counterparts, chaplains have a captive audience with which to work. As we say on the street, "people are our most important product." This has been a chaplain's credo since long before it appeared on TV. Touching the lives of people, personally and spiritually, is a value to which we have dedicated ourselves. It is not uncommon to hear dramatic and historic stories told of chaplains working through the night to help a shipmate who is in danger. Often these are life changing transitions in which chaplains also help them to make much needed "U-Turns" toward a healthier life. Most of these "miracle" stories are known only by the chaplain and the person or family involved.

Violence is destroying families. If religious institutions and agencies of various kinds are concerned about saving families and our young people, they must become involved. It is the responsibility of the clergy, and religious agencies as well, to become aware of violence in the community. Commanding Officers should and are taking the lead at trying to rid the seas services of violence. Emphasis is now being placed on creating new healthy living environments for sea service personnel.

The first step is to take personal responsibility for the safety and security of ourselves and of our loved ones. Each person is capable of making his or her household violence-free. But personal responsibility extends beyond the walls of one's own home, and reaches out into the streets, shopping centers, and jobs. The entire community can help control the problem of domestic violence. Prevention campaigns must be used to keep violence from occurring in the first place. In the sea services, domestic violence undermines the mission of readiness. In society at large, it undermines the fabric of the community and individual lives. Prevention can happen anywhere, not just at home, or in the military, it can happen in the media, in the workplace, and in the neighborhoods. In the military, domestic violence will not be tolerated. The larger community should also adopt a similar philosophy: our loved ones deserve to be safe. Couples and individuals need to understand that there are options to violence.

## CHAPTER 4

### Domestic Violence: A Family in Crisis

If we take a close look we will find that we have a multitude of families which fall into the dysfunctional category. Life in this country, or in Western culture for that matter, has not produced an overabundance of healthy family examples. In fact, many of the seemingly benevolent forces and agencies in our country work directly against family life and healthy families.

Although the United States has no national policy, as does Canada, John Wynn in his work Family Therapy in Pastoral Ministry suggests that a policy is inevitable. The sheer mass of social agencies and programs, each operating with its own goals and ideals, sometimes in direct conflict with each other, will ultimately result in some umbrella agency which will establish policy and direction.<sup>1</sup>

Because a national policy appears to be inevitable, it could be terribly restrictive. Government intervention in family life has already produced negative consequences to the family, yet social-minded people still tend to think that more government will produce favorable results. I doubt that is likely. But the real issue to be addressed here is what to do about the family today. Do we disassemble and discard dysfunctional families, or do we pick a certain level of dysfunction above which dismantle a family? Where do we draw the line?

Families in the military are becoming younger; the age in which they live is tragically saturated with licit drugs, and the propensity to use drugs is greater than ever. Domestic violence is so much a part of our culture. Young families in the military are

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Wynn, Family Therapy in Pastoral Ministry (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 10.

subjected to stress that is somewhat unknown in the civilian sector. Frequent moves all over the world, family separation, and low pay contribute to instability and in some cases, family violence. The young military family that lives all over the world on and near military bases is estranged from extended family and has to rely on the nuclear family. The rules and rituals that develop are shaped by the isolation and institutionalization of the military.

### The Military Family

When the fragile state of marriage in the military is challenged by frequent moves, separations, and no extended family, healthy rituals and flexible rules sometimes fail to develop; out of survival inflexible rituals and rigid rules also can develop. There are similarities between healthy family systems in the military and non-healthy family systems. The rigid rules that many families have to endure in the military often impose similar rigid rules on a healthy family system. Most families in the military could use counseling just to cope with the reality of life in the military. The associated problems of child abuse, spouse abuse, family violence, financial difficulties, sexual problems, etc., are problems that frequently surface can be indirectly traced to the unique life of military service.

In military families, children often have to survive with the military member away from home for up to a year at a time. It is not uncommon for military personnel to be gone from home for over one quarter of their careers. This causes family dynamics to change in unhealthy ways. If the propensity to commit violence is already present in the family, this only exacerbates an already volatile situation. The combination of teenage parents, war or the threat of war, family separation, makes for a volatile situation. Family therapy must be given top priority not only for the most effective control of domestic



violence, but for the care and nurture of all military families. This chapter presents the ideas of various scholars and therapists who have contributed to the subject of domestic violence in the family.

### A Healthy Vision

The discussion so far has dealt with the strength of the homeostatic condition and problems in the military that serve to disrupt this stability. In reality, defining a healthy family is difficult. There are examples around us, and yet when asked to describe what constitutes health, many differing answers arise.

Many dysfunctional systems are created as the result of an attempt to live within the framework of a particular concept of family health. These families may develop into the rigid, rules oriented families as mentioned by Jean Giles-Sims. They suffer as the result of a system of rules requiring particular behavior from each member. While failing to affirm individuality and worthiness of that member.<sup>2</sup>

In support of Jean Giles-Sims' argument, Lenore E. Walker attests that in the dysfunctional family: "There is little concern for the welfare or esteem of its members, but rather a focus on their performance. Consequently, any attempt to define or circumscribe family health should be approached with caution, in order to avoid the use of that definition as the groundwork for a new set of oppressive rules."<sup>3</sup>

The research of Chapter 3 indicated one notable difference between children of healthy families and children of dysfunctional families: Children raised in healthy families

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Giles-Simms, Wife Battering: A Systems Theory Approach (New York: Guilford Press, 1983), 140-41.

<sup>3</sup> Walker, 140.

have a strong sense of their own intrinsic self-worth while children raised in dysfunctional families have a sense of value only within the framework of their family role. As a result, one child feels loved by virtue of his or her very existence while the other feels worthy of love only when meeting the requirements of his or her assigned role. The fact that these roles are ill-defined and fluid in a dysfunctional home make it virtually impossible to feel worthy of love, or lovable.

Following are two concepts of family health, one by Sara Martin, who describes healthy families by virtue of their being open systems, and the other by Herbert Anderson, who also presents family health by its open nature, but with the added feature of interdependence of family members with one another and with their larger communities.

Sara Martin describes relative family health on a continuum, originally developed by Virginia Satir. This continuum is terminated at one end by the closed family system, and on the other end by the open family system. In between, and along the continuum, are the various degrees of troubled family systems. The closed system, as its name implies, does not allow its members out into the world and does not allow intrusion into its privacy. The open system allows much coming and going. The family develops a strong network with others outside the nuclear family, and lacks the paranoia regarding intrusion, which blocks the closed family.<sup>4</sup>

Martin describes characteristics of a dysfunctional family. She says that if you will turn all the negatives regarding dysfunctional families to the flip side, it will provide details

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<sup>4</sup> Sara H. Martin, Healing for Adult Children of Alcoholics (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 137.

as to the positive ways families operate.<sup>5</sup> Her list includes:

- A positive climate. The atmosphere is nonjudgemental.
- Each person is accepted with regard for his or her individual characteristics.
- Each person operates within his or her proper role.
- Members care for each other and affirm each other.
- Family members use open and direct communication.
- The family produces children who can separate; individualization occurs.
- Families come together out of choice.
- Members operate within clear, firm boundaries.
- The atmosphere is safe so that members can function spontaneously with humor and wit. Intimacy is achieved. This requires people to make themselves vulnerable by their commitment and self-disclosure.
- They share personal secrets and fears while trusting the other persons to continue to care about their feelings. They also commit themselves to being careful of the other in the same way.<sup>6</sup>

The family is not autonomous, and must interact with the general environment. Therefore that environment, which has its own authorities, also defines the family, according to Sara Martin.<sup>7</sup>

Herbert Anderson in his book The Family and Pastoral Care, uses paradoxes, or contradictions, in the form of dialectic to circumscribe the family. The principle of the

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<sup>5</sup> Sara Martin, 41.

<sup>6</sup> Sara Martin, 60.

<sup>7</sup> Sara Martin, 60.

dialectic, with its imperative for change, has interesting applications. The first dialectic involves:

The delicate balance between attention to the individual and attention to the unit as a whole; the health and vitality of a family is finally determined by how its members learn to be separate together.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, the individuation of each member, his or her relative growth and ability to function autonomously, is essential to the health of the family as a whole.

The second dialectic is more theological. It melds the contradictory principles of family as an anthropological imperative, being an end in itself, and family as a theological step in the continuing process of creation, leading toward a kingdom vision:

First, the family is a necessary component of creation. Despite wide diversity of form and function throughout human history, the family has fulfilled God's intent to provide a context for creation and care in order to insure the continuity of the human species. .... It is the nature of things that people live together in those communities that we have labeled family. .... Second, the importance of the family is qualified by the teaching of Jesus. From the perspective of discipleship, the family cannot be an end in itself. The metaphor of the realm of God is used here to point to God's intervention in history for purposes of continuing a process of transformation begun in creation.<sup>9</sup>

From this perspective, Anderson continues to present a pattern for healthy family life, which includes purpose and structure.

He sets out three fundamental purposes of family (procreation, community, and individuation) three essential characteristics of family structure (change, interdependence, and diversity) drawn from his presentation of paradoxes, or dialectic: Procreation, indeed and addition to a family unit (either in membership or function), produces change.

The capacity to adapt to change is essential for the family's survival in relation to society as a whole and as a particular organism.

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<sup>8</sup> Herbert Anderson, The Family and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, 15.

The family is a stabilizing community that provides continuity in the midst of change.

The vitality of the family, however, depends on an openness to its environment and on the interdependence of its membership.

The focus of a family on individuation fosters the uniqueness of each member; never an end in itself, the family exists for the sake of individual growth.

The promotion of individual growth within a family leads to diversity within the family that is paralleled in the variety of family structures within society; such diversity is a sign of God's extravagance.<sup>10</sup>

The most prominent features of these two concepts of family is the stress on openness and individuation, although Anderson says that openness requires some caution, as the family needs the ability to close its posture for protection from time to time. The family, as well as its individual members, needs to preserve the ability to negotiate between change and stability.<sup>11</sup>

Family health, then, promotes in its members a sense of worthiness and love-worthiness. Roles are well defined, and members are allowed to grow and individuate. The problem now becomes one of how to get there. How does a dysfunctional family change? Simply trying to adapt these features to any given family poses the threat of a new set of guidelines, or rules, within which to dysfunction. Families with incidents of domestic violence are generally approaching the closed end of the continuum described by Martin,<sup>12</sup> and they need hope that family health is possible.

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Sara Martin, 49.

### Family Homeostasis

Virginia Satir points out in her book Conjoint Family Therapy that the family acts to achieve balance in relationships. She writes that the marital relationship influences the character of family homeostasis. The marital relationship is the axis around which all other family relationships are formed. The mates are the architects of the family. A pained marital relationship often produces dysfunctional parenting.<sup>13</sup>

Satir likes to look at the system like a mobile suspended in mid air. In the healthy families when the wind blows, all the parts of the mobile move together; each has to accommodate the other. When the wind stops, the whole family system gradually regains its stability held together by the accustomed rules and patterns of responding. In unhealthy families the family mobile is rigid, because all of the members have to deal with the dysfunctional behavior of the member. This can be compared to holding one piece of the mobile; the rest of the pieces are no longer able to move about freely. When the wind blows, none of the pieces can accommodate the other; they all must accommodate to the piece that is held rigid. When the wind stops, they will all be left in a tangle.<sup>14</sup>

The family, is a system composed of individual family members, is seen as a system within a larger system--society. The family is affected by the larger society and as such constitutes an open system. Of importance to the development of family violence is the idea that disturbance in one aspect or parts of the system affects the rest of the system. Thus, a family is a system in which, when tension builds, violence is one method of coping

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<sup>13</sup> Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy (Palo Alto, Calif.: Science and Behavior Books, 1964), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Satir, 5-7.

with the built-up tension, as when the family strain resulting from a husband's being laid off from work may eventuate in the wife taking a belt to their small child.<sup>15</sup>

It must be noted that underlying the system's approach to dealing with domestic violence is the value placed on preserving the family. The system's approach is perhaps one of the least favorable treatment modalities because the batterer's violence is not isolated and ascribed to him alone, but somehow is attributable to the "relationship."

### Domestic Violence Rules and Roles

Most psychology literature seems to suggest that violence is learned behavior. While it is realized that many perpetrators of violence was at one time either a victim himself or herself, or lived in an environment where violence was the norm. On many levels, violence is an accepted, encouraged, and even glorified form of cultural expression. Many of our national past-time sporting events espouse to some form of accepted violence. It is probably that violence in the home simply mirrors society's tolerance. It's the "spillover" effect in which the acceptance of violence in the culture contributes to violence in the family. It's sometimes called "modeling."

Social approval of corporal punishment, for example, is consonant with the moral obligation that parents have to use enough force to train, protect, and control their children. From this perspective, violence against children is normative." Some argue that it is this cultural support of violence that lays the groundwork for child abuse. Hitting a spouse, for example, is less tolerable than hitting a child, and hitting a woman is less acceptable than hitting a man. However, a sizable minority of Americans still thinks that hitting a spouse is permissible, whereas hitting a stranger is an unacceptable form of

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<sup>15</sup> Satir, 23.

violence, if not a criminal act. In a national survey of domestic violence, 27% of respondents thought that slapping a spouse could be necessary, normal, or good.<sup>16</sup>

As for “rules” and “roles,” complaints about patriarchy have been at the foundation of the domestic violence movement since its inception. Patriarchy is a cultural belief system that allows men to hold greater power and privilege than women on a social hierarchy. In its extreme form, it literally gives men the right to dominate and control women and children. Although some may argue that patriarchy is dead and no longer dictates male and female interactions, many disagree. Straus, in fact, identifies a number of contemporary, cherished cultural standards that not only permit but also encourage husband-to-wife violence:

- The greater authority of men in our culture.
- Male aggressiveness and the notion that aggression positively correlates to maleness, and that aggression is not only an acceptable tool for men but also a way to demonstrate male identity.
- The wife and mother role as the preferred status for women.
- Male domination and orientation of the criminal justice system that provides little legal relief for battered women.<sup>17</sup>

Cultural norms vary within a society so that certain groups may accept violence more than other groups. Proponents of the “subculture of violence” theory maintain that there is a greater acceptance of violence among families in the lower class. From this perspective, violence is a “cultural norm,” a way of life. According to Straus, the foremost social factor influencing domestic violence is the existence of cultural norms that

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<sup>16</sup> Straus, Wife Beating, 54-76.

<sup>17</sup> Straus, Wife Beating, 54.



permit domestic violence, especial woman abuse. The “marriage license,” for example, is a hitting license.<sup>18</sup>

### Blaming Battered Women

One of the most crucial issues surrounding domestic violence is the propensity of society to blame the victim. Even to this day, we find ourselves in the same predicament. This in large measure can be contributed to society’s perceptions of “rules,” and “roles,” and myths. Many people tend to have strong and frequently “gender” oriented opinions about domestic violence. It’s incomprehensible to some that men could “behave like animals,” whereas others may be thinking women “ask for it.” In any case, most people believe that they could never become involved in an abusive relationship themselves, or remain in the relationship. But the truth is it can happen to anybody.

Myths contribute significantly to the perpetuation of domestic violence. For example, the myth that children need two parents present in order to develop to their full potential also helps to entrap battered women. Many shelter residents find it a revelation relieving them of much guilt when told by professional that one nonviolent parent is better for the children than two parents in a violent relationship.<sup>19</sup> The preeminence of the wife-and-mother role for women also works against battered women. Women get the sense that to succeed as women, they must succeed in their domestic relationships; and that they have an obligation to try their utmost to make these relationships work. Husbands, on the other hand, are not taught to place a similar heavy investment on the husband-and-father

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<sup>18</sup> Straus, Wife Beating, 54-76.

<sup>19</sup> Okun Lewis, Woman Abuse: Facts Replacing Myths (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 94.

role.<sup>20</sup>

The extent to which battered women are perceived to be at fault for the violence in their marriage has a profound effect on the treatment they received in a number of settings, such as in the clinic or in the courtroom. The evidence seems to suggest that in most instances, mental health professionals, medical personnel, and the police are likely to assume that the victim was at least an accomplice, if not indirectly responsible for the violent episode. Not only do members of society tend to blame battered women, but they also seem to have selected specific areas in which to fault battered women. As I mentioned earlier, one of the most common myths about battered women is that they “asked for it.” They either drink to much, come from the wrong family, suffer from low self-esteem, are other commonly held beliefs.

Domestic violence is a topic that has unleashed a flood of opinions. These opinions, however, are not always well informed. Without sufficient knowledge about domestic violence, people are like to develop nonscientific explanations or myths relative to the topic. I conclude this chapter by considering some of the myths that Gelles maintain are commonly associated with domestic violence:

Myth 1: Family violence is rare.

Myth 2: Only poor people are violent.

Myth 3: Abused children always become abusive parents, or spouses.

Myth 4: Battered women “asked for it.”

Myth 5: Alcohol and drugs are the real cause of domestic violence.

Myth 6: Violence and love cannot coexist.

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis, 95.

Myth 7: Women who claim date rape are “lying,” and “deserved it.”<sup>21</sup>

A number of myths about domestic violence have prospered. The existence of these myths further underscores the dearth of public knowledge about domestic violence and their relevance in helping people cope with violence. Myths are likely to remain in the background, influencing a number of important judgments that people make about domestic violence.

The O. J. Simpson case made everyone aware of the lethal potentiality of domestic violence. Occasionally, incidents of domestic violence escalate out of control and someone dies. Most of the time, it is the woman; the perpetrator either kills her or she commits suicide as the result of abuse. Sometimes multiple persons are killed; usually the man kills the woman and then himself. And, in a small number of cases, the woman strikes back with a deadly blow and kills the perpetrator.

The study completed by Straus had far reaching application for personnel in the seas services. It indicated that there is a higher rate of perpetration of women abuse among men employed in weapons-carrying occupations such as the military. As I mentioned earlier, much of the violence in the military can be contributed to the nature of the occupation.<sup>22</sup>

During the past ten years our communities and legal systems have made great strides in recognizing the seriousness of domestic violence. That is not to say that the myths concerning the topic are not present. And, while the misperceptions remain, the

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<sup>21</sup> Richard J. Gelles, “Abused Wives: Why Do They Stay?” Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38 (1976), 659-68.

<sup>22</sup> Straus, Wife Beating, 54-76.

court system is helping to build a public recognition of domestic violence as a serious crime that will not be tolerated by our society. Our communities have a responsibility to protect the safety of women and children, to stop violence in families, and to hold perpetrators accountable for the serious offenses they commit when they use their physical and psychological power to control members of their family. These are important aspects of protecting the rights of women and children. But they do not guarantee that victims and perpetrators will experience justice and healing from the brokenness that allowed the violence to happen.

Domestic violence is not an extension of the conflict that is present in most families. Conflict in families is normal, but not all family conflicts develop into violence. Some families experience intense conflict that never involves violence. For all practical purposes, domestic violence is rooted in unequal power relationships between a woman and man and in their silence about the crime. One partner, usually the man, uses psychological or physical power to control the other. Many men are not aware that battering physically assaulting their partner is a crime. Others feel they are justified in exerting their power in ways that hurt others.

Again, one of the commonly held myths about domestic violence is that it is "rare." Because family violence is hidden and difficult to measure, it is impossible to estimate precisely how frequent it occurs. However, the fact that it is rarely seen should not be taken to mean that it rarely occurs. In fact, if there is one point about which domestic violence experts seem to agree is that domestic violence is far more common than we

realize.<sup>23</sup>

Many women are afraid to actually reveal the depth of their abuse. Some believe that their partner has the right to exercise complete power over them. Even if they don't like being hurt, they may believe that their partner has the right to do anything he wants to them. Del Martin points out that accurately determining the incidence of wife-beating per se is impossible at this time. Obvious sources of information are police reports, court rosters, and emergency hospital admittance files, but wife-abuse is not an official category on such records. Information on the subject gets buried in other, more general categories. Calls to the police for help in marital violence, for instance, are usually reported as "domestic disturbance call," or DDs. If police respond to these calls but decide to that everything is under control, they may not file a report. If a wife has sustained serious injury, or if her husband has killed a wife, the incident is reported as assault and battery, aggravated assault, or homicide; wife-abuse is not necessarily specified. Sometimes written complaints registered by wives against their husbands are the only source of statistics available.<sup>24</sup>

The difference between domestic violence and most crimes is that violence in the home is usually an ongoing crime, deeply ingrained in the relationship and in the perpetrator's way of thinking. The brokenness cannot be quickly patched up and even in mediation of seemingly "simple" issues like dividing a bank account, many women are liable to compromise against their real interests of further endangering their lives.

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<sup>23</sup> Murray, Straus, "Sexual Inequality, Cultural Norms, Wife Beating," Victimology: An Internal Journal, 1 (1976): 54-76..

<sup>24</sup> Del Martin, 101-11.

As I reported earlier, the court system is not always supportive of victims of domestic violence. Prosecutors often attribute the low rate of prosecution of domestic violence cases to a lack of victim cooperation, by saying the “victims drop charges.”<sup>25</sup> However, as in all criminal cases, the state, not the victim, prosecutes the alleged offender. This response from prosecutors reflects the societal view that domestic violence is not a crime, and that it is up to the individual to prosecute. The victim in a domestic violence case is usually the primary witness for the prosecution. Without addressing the victim’s fear of retaliation by the abuser, domestic violence cases will rarely make it to trial.<sup>26</sup>

The courts, police, social workers, mental health professions, and even clergy have made tremendous progress at better understanding domestic violence. Victim blaming is real, and obviously the myths about domestic violence remain. Unfortunate, many judges and prosecutors are uninformed about the nature of domestic violence, which often results in victim blaming or minimization of the seriousness of the problem.

The only way to change the way domestic violence is perceived by the courts, and other agencies, is a long systematic educational process. Awareness of domestic violence must be a priority for leadership in all corners of society as it is in the military. The Navy and Marine Corps have made domestic violence a high priority item by launching a series of domestic violence prevention initiatives. There is no simple answer other than continued awareness building and change in attitudes if domestic violence.

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<sup>25</sup> Del Martin, 101-09.

<sup>26</sup> Del Martin, 101-09.

### Summary

The old worn out adage that we have all heard in some form, "If the Navy and Marine Corps wanted you to have a family, they would have issued you one," is still alive and well. This kind of statement, while admittedly seems part of our ancient history, still contributes in some small way to the larger domestic violence problem. Families in the sea services are here to stay. They continue to be a vital part of the Navy and Marine Corps community. That fact is no longer debatable. However, the degree of support that is provided to military families still remains an issue to be discussed. The Navy and Marine Corps combined represent about 40 percent of the active duty strength of the U. S. military. Service members, for the most part, are young, married with children, in tight financial situations, and very often away from the support of an extended family. This means that, unlike most of their civilian counterparts, they are unable to depend on grandmothers to baby sit, or fathers to perform minor house and car repairs. They can't even experience the comfort of sharing problems with close friends and relatives. Thus, life in the military itself precipitates special problems that require special attention. Far too often, domestic violence is the residual effect of these stresses in our sea services.

Violence among service members and their families in the military is as real as it is in the general population. These young men and women, who comprise the military, are the products of a larger culture where violence, in some form, is a regular occurrence. While the Navy and Marine Corps have programs in place that are designed to address the problem, often the scars and pain that are experienced by victims is long-lasting. In spite of the efforts on the part of the sea services to eliminate domestic violence from its ranks, the problem is no less real today than before. Domestic violence awareness, education and

treatment, must become a top priority for the military leadership. Leadership plays an integral part in the battle against domestic violence. Just as the military fought discrimination and drug and alcohol abuse successfully, the same kind of effort should be given to domestic violence. This means that the Navy and Marine Corps should be proactive by establishing programs that strengthen families in the sea services. Many of the problems that are evident within the military communities can be contributed in large measure to a breakdown in the family. Therefore, programs that build character and ethical behavior should be part of the military's budgetary process.

To dispel the myths related to domestic violence, leadership can highlight the following recommended prevention activities:

1. Awareness briefings for all civilian employees and military units.
2. Publication of news and feature articles pertaining to domestic violence.
3. Distribution of flyers and posters throughout the military community.
4. Running prevention classes.
5. Advising spouses who feel they may be at risk.
6. Ensuring the safety and security of victims.
7. Preventing recurrence of domestic violence problem.

These steps will help in the short term to impact domestic violence within the command. The goal is to make all military families safe and secure, and to share prevention successes with the civilian community. These and other activities will concentrate on educating the entire community on the nature of domestic violence, that



spouse abuse and child abuse are not tolerated in the military, and on the options that are considered appropriate for both husbands and wives.

## CHAPTER 5

### God and Domestic Violence

The purpose for this project is not to redesign any current treatment program that either the Navy has in place, or might be available in the local community. However, it is intended to offer an alternative approach that I believe will enhance any domestic violence program that is presently in place. Current domestic violence programs in the Navy tend to focus on the victim without providing any treatment for the abuser. There needs to be more emphasis placed on counseling for the abuser as well. In fact, treatment programs need to be made available that will provide treatment to the family as a system, with the understanding that the family is the most powerful influence on both the individual's existing condition and future well-being.

Domestic violence is about the abuse of power. It affects families, men and women, boys and girls. Although I am not interested in the redesign of another domestic violence program, I am a strong advocate for more involvement by the chaplain. One reason I believe that current treatment programs are not successful is that the totality of the problem is not being addressed. I say that because I believe that domestic violence has a theological dimension to it. Subsequently, this chapter will explore domestic violence from a theological perspective. A domestic violence program should be provided that addresses the emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual needs of the individual. No person within the command understands the theological dimension to the domestic violence problem more than does the chaplain.

In most instances, although the chaplain is part and parcel of the interdisciplinary treatment team in the Navy, he or she plays more-or-less a cursory role in the treatment

process itself. I maintain that any effective treatment of domestic violence in the Navy must bring together all persons in order to impact the current domestic violence trend. There needs to be a change in the way treatment is provided to both the victim and the perpetrator. I also advocate that the role of the chaplain in the war on domestic violence in the military should be expanded.

While I have often maintained that the family should be treated as a system, by drawing the family into the domestic violence formula, I am most concerned about changing the treatment format and not the model. This particular format is also adaptable to a wide range of environments, including churches that desire to address domestic violence and provide ministry with understanding and sensitivity.

#### Domestic Violence and Religion

With so much violence in our society, a religious person who is victimized by rape, battering, or child sexual abuse frequently faces the questions: Why I am I abused in this way? Where is God in my abuse? These profound theological questions cannot be answered simply with platitudes and then dismissed. The question of why there is abuse at all is one of classic theological debate, to which there is no completely satisfactory answer. Human abuse in the midst of a world created by a compassionate and loving God is a dimension of human experience, which is most disturbing and disquieting. The particular experience of suffering that accompanies victimization by sexual and domestic violence raises concerns with regard to theodicy. Jon Sobrino, in her book Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, noted that the question of “how a loving God can allow

suffering, is a perennial atheist question, and a legitimate and honest one.”<sup>1</sup> A question that frequently surfaces when people are undergoing intense and challenging circumstances in their lives.

Silence, disappointment, doubt, and suffering are not things that are foreign to people of faith--they are common to us all. People struggling with two aspects of the experience of abuse when they ask, Why am I being abused? First is the question of cause, that is, the source of the abuse. The second aspect involves the meaning or purpose of abuse.

These are age-old questions that tend to surface whenever a person is undergoing tremendous trial and tribulation. It suffices to say, however, that some suffering in the world results from arbitrary, accidental sources such as natural disasters. However, much of the suffering is caused by human behavior: acts by some bring suffering to others. These acts can generally be understood as acts of injustice. God allows such acts or behavior because God has given persons free will and does not intervene when they choose to engage in unrighteous, unjust acts. Other people suffer from the consequences of these acts.<sup>2</sup>

This explanation may or may not be adequate for situations clearly caused by human negligence or meanness, intended or not: for example, a fatal car accident caused by a drunk driver, chronic brown lung disease in textile workers who are denied protection from occupational hazards, birth defects in families living near a toxic waste dump, or

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth. Trans. Paul Barnes and Francis McDonagh. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 234.

<sup>2</sup> Sobrino, 234.

incestuous abuse inflicted by a father upon his children. Yet it is still not a wholly satisfactory explanation. Those who are victims of abuse search further for answers, or at least for someone to blame.

I find it profoundly unacceptable when persons search to justify suffering as if it was a good thing: it's free will, or it's because of Adam. In a misguided attempt to defend God, people will take a biblical concept that could offer profound insight into one's situation and trivialize it into trite intellectual justification for suffering. There is no denying that there are scripture passages that seem to validate the concept of suffering. The Christian tradition perpetuated the idea that Christians should take up their crosses and follow Christ. Jurgen Moltmann, writing on the topic of "The Fellowship of Christ's Suffering: Martyrology," wrote:

The mediaeval church expanded the concept of the martyr. Thomas Aquinas made this clear. Only faith in Christ grants the glory of martyrdom to those who suffer. A Christian means one who belongs to Christ. Now a person is said to belong to Christ not simply because he believes in him, but also because he undertakes virtuous deeds in the Spirit of Christ. The martyr is someone is accordingly someone who is persecuted and put to death because of the confession of faith--and also someone who is persecuted because of the obedience to faith.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, particularly a Christian person who is a victim of domestic violence might interpret her fate as the Christian thing to do since this idea seems to be perpetuated by the church. The church teaches that Christ suffered. In as much as Christ suffered, we too must go and do likewise. Suffering deals with issues that touch individuals at the core of their being. In as much as the use of Scripture can be used to justify suffering, it can also be used to perpetuate violence against one another. Elisabeth

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<sup>3</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions

S. Fiorenza and Mary S. Copeland, for example, in their book Violence against Women makes that point quite clear:

There is no denying that in the biblical writings there are texts that legitimate social discrimination against women and sometimes even violence against women. From an early stage this problem has been a theme of feminist scholarship. Biblical narratives concerned with violence against women, run the gamut of repression of women because they are women, to sexual denunciation and even sexual murder.<sup>4</sup>

Theological study cannot ignore this abuse, which, whether in the form of rage, contempt or maltreatment, today affects a considerable number of women. At the same time it must be recognized that this abuse is women's bodies and even identities, degrades those who release their frustrations in this way, since such behavior reveals a serious weakness beneath the blind fury. The violent act itself, as indicated by the profiles of those who behave in this way, is a confession and sign of personal imbalance, although it may be encouraged by external factors that prevent cannot ignore. Fiorenza and Copeland, writing from a more feminist perspective of suffering, maintain that advertising contributes to the public perception of women as nothing more than objects.

This ancestral suffering persists in the form of an obscure problem, concealed by an understandable shame in many cases and by defenselessness in others. It also continues because of the liberties the media take with the female body. The inherent aggressiveness in the human condition, together with the power of the feminine in advertising, are turned into consumer objects in our societies, and the normal course of events would give the impression that violence is almost a cultural destiny.<sup>5</sup>

There are many contributing factors to the domestic violence issue. As we gain a

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(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 198.

<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, and Mary S. Copeland. Violence against Women (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 100.

<sup>5</sup> Fiorenza and Copeland, 101.

better understanding as to what precipitates domestic violence, we also realize that it is not our culture's destiny. I find it equally naive and unacceptable, however, when people clearly condemn God as cruel and impotent as if they could objectively sit above it all, detached, untouched, as if the issues relative to domestic violence didn't effect them just as much as they do every other human being on earth. Domestic violence is a problem that affects us all. God uses people.

### Blaming God

Victims of sexual or domestic violence have a strong tendency to hold God or themselves responsible for the abuse even though there is clearly a perpetrator whose actions resulted in the victim's suffering. While his or her sinful acts may be understood as a consequence of his or her own brokenness and alienation, he or she is nonetheless responsible for actions that brings suffering to others. Self-blame or God-blame for one's experience of victimization simply avoids acknowledging that a particular person is responsible for the abusive acts.

These are issues that touch individuals at the core of their being. We can justify suffering or say that God is unjust, but either way we pull the rug out from under our feet when we do. It simply appears to be symptomatic of both sides to search for a detachable intellectual answer rather than to really face the problem. We need to stop kidding ourselves. We are not above the problem so that we can push it off on God, in a denial of our human need.

What is frequently utilized by victims of domestic violence, basically is nothing more than old-fashioned superstition. It seeks to explain a current experience of suffering in terms of a previous "sinful" act on the part of the victim: the current suffering is God's

punishment for the preceding “sin” which God has judged.<sup>6</sup> Hence a battered woman now being abused by her husband can “explain” why this is happening by remembering that, when she was sixteen, she had a sexual intercourse once with her boyfriend. She knows this was a “sin” and that God was displeased with her, so God must now be punishing her teenage indiscretion. Or she may have been “disobedient” and now submitted to her husband. She understands the situation to reflect God’s acting to bring about her suffering for a justifiable reason; she blames herself and accepts her battering as God’s will for her. At least she can “explain” why this happened to her; unfortunately, her explanation leaves no room for questioning her suffering or for confronting her abuser with his responsibility for it.

If God is to blame for the misfortune, one can direct anger at God for causing the suffering. For whatever reason, it is argued, God has singled out the victim of sexual or domestic violence to suffer. Two things result. First she or he is driven away from God by the pain and anger; second, no one is held accountable for what he or she has done to the victims. The suffering of the victim is exacerbated by the feeling that God has sent this affliction to her or him personally and has abandoned her or him in the midst of it. Harold Kushner offers a valuable reframing of this assumption:

We can maintain our own self-respect and sense of good without having to feel that God has judged us and condemned us. We can be angry at what has happened to us, without feeling that we are angry with God. More than that, we can recognize our anger at life’s unfairness, our instinctive compassion at seeing people suffer, as coming from God who teaches us to be angry at injustice and to feel compassion for the afflicted. Instead of feeling that we are opposed to God, we can feel that our indignation is God’s anger at unfairness working through us, that when we cry out, we

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<sup>6</sup> Sobrino, 97.



are still on God's side, and He is still on ours.<sup>7</sup>

God is not only not the cause of injustice and suffering but is instead the source of our righteous anger at the persons or circumstances that do cause suffering as well as our source of compassion for those who suffer.

The second aspect of the abuse involves the attribution of meaning or purpose. What meaning does this experience of suffering hold for the victim? People have great difficulty accepting the irrational and often arbitrary nature of sexual and domestic violence. Instead of realizing that these things happen for no good reason, they attempt to manufacture a good reason or seek a greater good; for example, suffering "builds character" or is "a test of one's faith." The purpose of suffering is then the lesson it teaches, and the result should be stronger faith in God. Purposefulness somehow softens the pain of the suffering. If some greater good is salvaged, then perhaps the suffering was worth it.

An understanding of the meaning of one's abuse begins with the differentiation between voluntary and involuntary suffering. Voluntary suffering is a painful experience that a person chooses in order to accomplish a greater good. It is optional and is a part of a particular strategy toward a particular end. For example, the acts of civil disobedience by civil rights workers in the United States in the 1960s resulted in police brutality, imprisonment, and sometimes death for those activists. These consequences were unjustifiable but not unexpected. Yet people knowingly chose to endure this suffering in order to change the circumstances of racism, which caused even greater daily suffering for

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<sup>7</sup> Harold S. Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 45.

many.

### God's Image

According to Genesis 1:27, God created man in his own image; in the previous verse the image and likeness of God are synonymous terms which together emphasize the concept of man's resemblance of God. Apparently the word "image" suggests an anthropomorphic view of God, but more is in the idea than that. It signifies that human beings have a rational endowment and the capacity for self-consciousness and self-determination including the responsibility of moral choice, and that they can commune with God.

We can control our destiny. Whether we control our destiny is another story. God made us in God's image, and that gives us the freedom to reject or accept God. This freedom means that we can choose to destroy ourselves or help ourselves, or destroy the earth or help the earth. It is all in our hands. The "Image of God" concept suggests that any abuse inflicted upon women and children is a distortion of who God is. The book of Genesis clearly accentuates the fact that basically men and women originated with God. Neither man nor woman is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning that both man and woman are placed at the pinnacle of God's creation. Neither sex is exalted, and neither is depreciated.

"And God said, let us make man in our own image, male and female created he them," reads the Old Testament record (KJV). The image of God contains elements which, though unified on the divine plan, are divided into two sexes on the human plane. According to the Bible, Eve was to be Adam's partner. The unique roles of the sexes are a consequence of the fall, directly attributed to Adam's refusal to take responsibility for his

eating the forbidden fruit by pointing at Eve and saying, "She did it." Eve in return said, "No, the snake did it," They failed to stand together before God and say, "We did it."

This behavior broke the original perfect, trusting relationship, which God had given them and set the pattern of tremendous distrust of one partner towards the other. Thus constituting what is often referred to as man or human beings' first major crisis. A crisis in the sense that there is no area of human life on which people today are so dependent for personal happiness and fulfillment as that of love between man and woman, a love that is made lasting in marriage and family life.

Marriage has been, for example, described as the enterprise into which we expect a relatively high percentage of the people to enter and an even higher percentage to be successful. Nevertheless, some marriages fail and are dissolved. They simply do not work. In many instances, families are torn apart because domestic violence has become the nemesis.

The concept of the "Image of God" suggests that both male and female were made in God's image. In creating the human race, "male" and "female," God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with the inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person. When domestic violence is perpetuated by one spouse against another, it clearly disregards everything that is suggested by the creation story. The abuser, through acts of violence against his or her partner, in addition to inflicting pain. One partner is not superior to another. God's image, in the individual person, therefore should not be negated by acts of domestic violence. The Genesis creation stories make clear that humankind in the image of God clearly consists of and requires both male and female. Woman was created as a partner for man. The "image of

God” connotes value, dignity, and worth. It serves as a significant corner-piece for the Genesis of the Holy Scriptures.

Sometimes people try to explain their abuse by saying that it is “God’s will” or “part of God’s plan for my life.” These explanations assume God to be stern, harsh, and even cruel and arbitrary. This image of God runs counter to a biblical image of a kind, merciful, and loving God. The God of this biblical teaching does not single out anyone to suffer for the sake of suffering, because suffering is not pleasing to God. Throughout the Old Testament, marriage is used as an image for the relationship between God and his people. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all use this image. Its most extensive application is to be found in the Book of Hosea. The use of the metaphor confirms the great value ascribed to sexuality by the Hebrew. If this were not so, it would hardly have been chosen to illustrate God’s relationship with his creatures.

Jesus, on the topic of marriage and divorce, warned against the belief current in his time that eternal compliance with a set of rules was sufficient to fulfill one’s religious duties. What he emphasized was the disposition of the heart. He stressed the unity and relational aspects of marriage by insisting that the husband had duties toward the wife, and not merely the other way around. He showed an obvious high regard for the family, and consistently disapproved of all forms of relationships in which one party was abusing the other without regard for the other’s own needs.<sup>8</sup>

St. Paul has been maligned as an ascetic who considered marriage an inferior if necessary form of human existence. This interpretation is contrary to what Paul actually

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<sup>8</sup> Antionette Smith, and Leon Smith, Pastor's Manual: Growing Love in Christian Marriage (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1981), 27.

said. Like Jesus, Paul was a good Jew, and as such, his concern was clearly with the misuses of marriage and family. He laid great emphasis on the communal and corporate aspects of Christian life, and tended to view all sin in terms of its effect on the entire community of believers, not just the effect on the individual sinner. Paul continued the ancient metaphor of marriage to describe God's relationship with His people in new Christian terms when he referred to the Church as the "Bride of Christ."

The church has contributed remarkably to Christian understanding of abuse as a "cross" to be borne. If Christ bore a cross, then Christians must do likewise. If Christ suffered, then Christians must suffer. To further illustrate how the Christian worldview considers these images from the Bible:

....as the suffering of Christ abound in us....<sup>9</sup>

....that as you are partakers of the suffering....<sup>10</sup>

....and the fellowship of his suffering....<sup>11</sup>

...I reckoned that the suffering of this present.<sup>12</sup>

....for an example of suffering affliction....<sup>13</sup>

...Who now rejoice in my suffering for you.<sup>14</sup>

....their salvation perfect through suffering....<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. 1:5 all scripture passages are from the King James Version.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. 1:7.

<sup>11</sup> Phil. 3:10.

<sup>12</sup> Rom. 8:18.

<sup>13</sup> James 5:10.

<sup>14</sup> Col. 1:24.

....enduring the same suffering which we....<sup>16</sup>

....suffering the vengeance of eternal life....<sup>17</sup>

....thou suffers that woman Jezebel....<sup>18</sup>

....the kingdom of heaven suffers violence....<sup>19</sup>

The biblical reference can all too easily become a means of substantiation for the victims of domestic violence. Many victims of abuse have used the Bible to validate their behavior, and thus in many instances continue in an abusive relationship. But God created us male and female, of equal worth. His desire is that both male and female be a reflection of his image as they live out their lives in a love filled life. He is a compassionate God who is concerned about the total well being of each of person.

There are several references in the Bible that substantiates the notion that both male and female are created in God's image, God's likeness. Consider these references from the Bible:

....said, Let us make man in our image....<sup>20</sup>

...God created man in his own image.<sup>21</sup>

....in the image of God created he man....<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Heb. 2:10.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Cor. 1:6.

<sup>17</sup> Jude 2:7.

<sup>18</sup> Rev. 2:20.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 11:12.

<sup>20</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>21</sup> Gen. 1:27.

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 1:27.

....in his own likeness, after his image.....<sup>23</sup>

....for in the image of God made he man....<sup>24</sup>

The word “man” as it is used in the preceding references is clearly generic here. It means “woman” well as man, and the meaning is that God created human beings, both male and female, in his image, the divine image. Only in this understanding does the word “them” or “male and female he created them” makes sense. Moreover, it is clear that the creation story makes no distinction between women and men as persons because it immediately continues by saying: “God blessed them (both male and female), saying: ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth.’”<sup>25</sup>

Jesus’ relationships with women indicate that he embraced this notion that women are full human persons created in the image of God, equal with men, and having no less dignity than men. Indeed, his relationship with women, meaningful in themselves for them and for him, may have been prophetic, i.e., as having a teaching value for his contemporaries and for us. We note too, as we contemplate the ministry of Jesus that he related to women with a marvelous inner freedom. Thus, he acknowledged the dignity of women and their equality with men in the sight of God, in whose image he knew they were created.

Any attempt to use the biblical reference to support domestic violence, or abusive behavior towards females and children, will perhaps be futile. Moreover to imply that the

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<sup>23</sup> Gen. 5:3.

<sup>24</sup> Gen. 9:6.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 1:22.

male is superior to the female because the historical Christ was male is also both insensitive and wrong. St Paul wrote to the Galatians: "There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus."<sup>26</sup> Paul may well have been a man not entirely free from the rabbinic view of the role of women, but he surely reflected the same teachings of Jesus in regard to the equal humanity and equal dignity among women and men as redeemed persons.

### Marriage Understood Theologically

Within the Christian community, marriage is seen as the creative work of God. It is a form of human relationship that God ordained for people generally and not alone for Christians. Hence God's intention in the very structure of society applies to all people whether they acknowledge God or not. Marriage, then, is not a convenient pairing of a man and woman that is contrived by society, but reflects the basic social structure given by God in creation. This is not to suggest that God intends for every person to marry, or that those who marry are thereby superior to single persons. Rather, the belief is that God has some particular purposes for marriage. The four purposes, or functions of marriage:

1. Union. Marriage is viewed as having a unifying or creative function. When two people marry they create a new unity without, of course, losing their own individuality in the process. Marriage is, in fact, an intimate relationship in which two individuals of equal worth give up their independents, become interdependent, and find their individuality strengthened and developed by their union. Female and male "become one" in marriage. Jesus referred to the creation (Genesis 2:24) when he said "The two shall become one"(Matthew 19:5). This is interpreted to mean not one physical body or person, but a new dynamic unit--a functioning, living, growing unity of two persons.
2. Fellowship. God created human beings female and male; persons

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<sup>26</sup> Gal. 3:28.



who are incomplete as isolated individuals. Human beings are made to need communion with one another. In the Genesis account of creation, “the Lord said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone.’ “God instituted marriage as a means of overcoming the loneliness, this incompleteness of individuality, and for meeting the needs of a man and woman to complement and fulfill each other.

3. Procreation. It is within marriage, Christians hold that God intends for life to be conceived and children brought into the world. This does not mean that all couples should have children, not those couples who choose not to have children are somehow inferior to those who do. What it means is that procreation within marriage is the way God plans for continuing the population.
4. Nurture. This concept suggests that all persons--adults and children--need nurturing throughout life. For adults, marriage is an opportunity for husband and wife to help each other grow to their fullest potential, both as individuals and as a couple. Since marriage is not an end in itself, one of the purposes of marriage is to so equip and sustain persons that, individually and as a couple, they may be better able to serve others, to make this world a better place in which to live.<sup>27</sup>

Marie Fortune holds that traditionally, the religious community has responded to violence in the family with silence, a silence that suggests complicity in perpetuating the patterns of chronic abuse in families. The religious community needs to respond with active involvement for two reasons:

1. When violence occurs in a family, religious concerns are bound to arise for those who come from a religious background, even though they may not be currently active in a congregation. These theological and pastoral issues need to be effectively addressed in the context of the person’s own religious tradition and activity.
2. Some active members of the religious community may themselves be victims or abusers in families but may hesitate to seek pastoral assistance because of the silence maintained on the subject. Thus, the mistaken belief that violence in the family doesn’t happen here (in “my” congregation, “my” family, “my” town) gets reinforced. In fact, there are many active members of the religious community

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<sup>27</sup> Smith, and Smith, 27.

(clergy and lay) who have or do experience abuse in their families.<sup>28</sup>

Experiences of violence and abuse within the family strike at the very core of individual and family life and can be much more devastating than violence between strangers. This impact is expressed in Psalm 55: 4-8;12-13:

My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; truly, I would flee far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; I would hurry to find shelter for myself from the raging wind and tempest."<sup>29</sup>

It is not enemies who taunt me--I could bear that; it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me--I could hide from them. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend, with whom I kept pleasant company; we walked in the house of God with the throng."<sup>30</sup>

The place where one expects to find nurture, care, safety, and intimacy is instead, for many people, a place of fear and violence. The trust placed in one's partner or parent or adult child is betrayed by the abuse. Violence is destroying families. If religious institutions and agencies are concerned with saving families, they must place a high priority on the needs of people suffering from such abuse and on the programs that seek to prevent it. Unfortunately, in some situations, scripture and theology have been misused by the abuser and the victim to justify or accept continued violence in the family. The misuse has resulted from a lack of understanding of the nature and causes of such violence and from a failure to recognize how dangerous--even lethal--it can be. This misuse has also resulted from a misappropriation of religious teaching. The silence that the religious

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<sup>28</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Psalm 55:4-8.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 55:12-13.

community has maintained on the subject for many years has contributed to this lack of understanding by failing to correct it.<sup>31</sup>

All violence, especially domestic violence, is destructive-physically and spiritually. It threatens self-respect and trust, and gives rise to feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, humiliation, worthlessness, and self-blame. Violence against women and children silences them by paralyzing their minds and emotions, taking away the ability to act and their ability to envision an alternative future. There is a great dealing of healing that must take place. This is not only within the individual, but must also result in a transformed society.

Violence against women is more possible in situations where the church's teaching and practice legitimize the inferior status of women over against men. This has been the legacy of the church. This legacy is echoed over and over again at conferences, in counseling offices, in seminaries, as a depressing litany of Christian complicity in male violence and failure to bring healing and hope into the lives of survivors is heard: clergy who disbelieve or blame.

It is the responsibility of the clergy, the laity, and the religious agencies to become aware of violence in the family and to address the problem actively in congregations and communities. The religious community can become a vital resource for families mired in violence. The religious community is in a natural position to intervene. It can help families stop abuse and help them create new healthy living environments for adults, teenagers, and children.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 4-5.

### Strengthening the Family

As chaplains, a key aspect of our job description is to bring to others the healing presence of God. People need to know that they are created in God's image. God's temple dwells in each one of us. God is loving and compassionate. For most of us, the desire to bring families and individuals into the presence of God is a central part of our sense of vocation. There are many ways in which we as chaplains serve as reminders that God is present. Certainly most of us plan our public worship services, regardless of our tradition, with the aim of bring others into the presence of God, where their lives may be transformed, and filled with His power.

In our religious education, we seek to train the hearts and minds of those we shepherd in the discipline of loving God and keeping God's commandments. Yet of all the ways in which a chaplain can effectively bring others an increased awareness of the presence of God, perhaps no other means is as effective as the presence of the chaplain himself or herself. Quite often it is our own presence which conveys the presence of God. In the Christian tradition from which I write, this is known as incarnation. In the Incarnation, God took on human flesh. And he still does. Chaplains serve as reminders to victims of domestic violence and abuse that God is good and loving.

In many instances, the chaplain serves as the command's first line of defense when it comes to families. They are usually the first ones sought out when they are experiencing pain and difficulty. Quite often, the chaplain will know that a family is in crisis long before it becomes common knowledge to the command leadership. There is a perception in the Navy and Marine Corps that the chaplain can handle about any crisis situation. I submit, however, that this is a false perception. But nevertheless, it's out there. There is a level

of trust that families have for the chaplain that is already in place. Often times, long before the service member left home he or she was informed either by parents or someone else who is familiar with the role of the chaplain, if you should encounter any problems, find the chaplain. Now, of course, if we follow through with the idea of expanding the role of the chaplain in the treatment of domestic violence, we certainly want to be sure that chaplains have the necessary training that will enable them to experience a degree of success.

The origins of domestic violence have been traced back to the times when history was first recorded. Biblical references to wife beating are common place. Patriarchy is often blamed for the introduction of sexism in society through its subordination of women. Familiarity with this historical analysis is critical to treatment and intervention programs.

Chaplains play a major role in guiding families. The breakdown of the family, and the lack of family values, have been singled out as the reason why domestic violence is increasing in our nation. With the increase in single parent families, increase in the divorce rate is intricately linked to the aforementioned problem. If we take a close look, we will find that we have a multitude of families, which fall into the dysfunctional category. Life in this country, or in the Western culture for that matter, has not produced an over abundance of healthy family examples. In fact, many of the seeming benevolent forces and agencies in our country appear to work directly against family life and healthy families.

A casual glance across the landscape of problems that confront society quickly reveals the serious consequences of inattentive and ineffective parenting. The elevation of radical individualism among our nation's youth and the absence of traditional family values among children who do not know right from wrong points back to home. The rise of

gangs and violent crime among teens showing no remorse points back to home. The growing number of abused and abusive adults points back to home.

When we discuss the effectiveness of our commands and the safety of our communities in the Navy and Marine Corps, we need to examine the health of our people's homes. An important aspect of strengthening the home is to shore up the relationship between family members.

The Chaplain Corps plays a significant role in strengthening families. The goal of strengthening families is accomplished by placing God back into the equation of relationships. The adage, "The family that prays together, stays together" is a valid proclamation. Almost all statistical research suggests that person who attend church and have a strong faith in God, are less likely to engage in criminal activities. Thus, the Chaplain Corps can help our military personnel to put God back into the family equation. When we understand the priority that God places on the family and raise up the biblical model, then the homes of our Sailors and Marine personnel will all benefit.

The significant growth of single and step-parent families in the military has seeming transformed the family structure irreversibly. The implication of this change on children is predictably disruptive. Although these cultural trends appear inevitable, God's principles with regard to relationships still apply. The single parent and blended families, as well as nuclear families, are in need of the encouragement and insight given by Scripture. Military families have added obstacles to overcome, as if the cultural influences themselves were not challenging enough in rearing children and maintaining healthy relationships between spouses. The frequent and often extended separations due to deployments further compound the problem. The implications raised by absent parents,

especially the father, have recently gained significant attention.

Another issue just as prevalent is the transient lifestyle young men and women in the sea services face. Changes in friends, churches, schools, schedules, and resources are only a few ways that families are disrupted through uprooting. The growing number of geographic bachelors is just one response to this lifestyle. Anyone of these factors still adds up to an absent parent, which ultimately means added stress for each member of the family.

Captain Richard I. Ridenour, MC, USN, in The Military Family: Dynamics and Treatments, sites several other factors that portray the military family. These factors can become concerns, impacting relationships within the family, and ultimately the command. Included is: (1) The onus that families must live life under the dictum that the mission must come first. (2) The adapting of the family's natural growth and spontaneity to the rigidity and conformity demanded by the nature of the military. (3) The specter of early retirement much sooner than their civilian counterparts. (4) The omnipresent rumors and treat of loss during mission. (5) That they may have to face and deal with a difficult situation because they may be leaving soon.<sup>33</sup>

There is little doubt that all these factors add to the demands of being a military spouse or parent. Although these same factors may be faces by the civilian counterparts, there may be no other major culture that confronts so many or all of them as those in the Armed Forces. Family matters also impact the command. Family situations may involve time away from the job, added resources spent resolving the situation, and added stress

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<sup>33</sup> Florence W. Kaslow, and Richard Ridenour, eds., The Military Family: Dynamics and Treatment (New York: Guilford Press, 1984), 2.

and distraction on the service member. Job performance, transition adjustment, and dealing with stress are all good indicators of the health of an individual's family relationship. For example, how a young recruit adjusts those first weeks of boot camp often is determined by their family history. Even the chaplain's own family is not immune to or unaffected by deployments, Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders, temporary living conditions, disruption in schools, etc. Reaching out to parents and to families helps our own Chaplain Corps community create a healthy home life.

Scripture's timeless principles offer insight, whether the discussion about relationships concerns neighbors, husbands and wives, the work place, or the parents and children. The parent is God's agent to provide, protect, nurture, and establish children in the way they should go. Scripture speaks volumes on the family, the role of parents, and the need to establish a strong legacy. Being a parent involves a partnership with God and an opportunity to shape a child's character, determining their destiny. Children are the culmination of what is contributed by their parents.

The great war hero, General Douglas MacArthur, once stated concerning his role as a parent:

I take pride in the fact that by profession, I am a soldier. But I am more proud, infinitely more, to be a father. A soldier destroys in order to build; a father only builds, never destroys. The one has the potentialities of death, while the other embodies creation and life. While the hordes of death are mighty, the battalions of life are mightier still. It is my hope that my son, when I am gone, will remember me not from the battles, but in the home, repeating with him our simple prayer, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven.'<sup>34</sup>

The command's full support is essential in establishing an ongoing outreach to our families and their futures. It goes beyond seeing this as another program, but as an

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<sup>34</sup> Gary P. Weeden, 18.



essential ingredient to the command's overall effectiveness and readiness. Leadership support signals that the importance of the family is more important than rhetoric.

Command support may come in various ways including the Commanding Officer's participation, and time given during working hours to conduct family related items.

Command readiness involves making it a priority to help establish healthy homes. Raising the standards is not about changing deployment schedules or command specific obligations, but shoring up the families that face these tasks. Many of these initiatives will go a long way in terms of minimizing stress in family--a factor that contributes significantly to domestic violence in military families.

Recent initiatives have elevated the important role of parents. The Coast Guard, for example, established a two-year maternity leave-of -absence (without pay) for new mothers, and the Marine Corps has given fathers the opportunity to take 30 days paternity leave, at the Commanding Officer's discretion. As mentioned before, the chaplain is the one who has his or her fingers on the pulse of these families. In addition to providing the same kinds of service as aforementioned, the chaplain can lift a prophetic voice in support of families in many creative ways. Parent workshops, a Day with Dad or Mom at the command, or retreats are only a few programs that can be implemented. But what is essential is a proactive message based on principles. God's principles are timeless and applicable within the diversity of today's family structures. Some notable principles include faith, commitment, loving, discipline, respect in relationships, dealing with crisis situations, communications, sharing, and time management.

#### The Marriage Covenant and Divorce

The residual effect of domestic violence in many marital relationships tends to be

divorce. From a Biblical perspective, the topic of divorce has created a lot of controversy. It is because of this teaching that has caused many victims of domestic violence to remain in an abusive relationship. Many religious leaders are guilty of making the claim that spouses should remain together regardless of the violence that has been frequent in the relationship. Marie Fortune says that a covenant between marriage partners has the following elements:

1. It is made in full knowledge of the relationship.
2. It involves a mutual giving of self to the other.
3. It is assumed to be lasting.
4. It values mutuality, respect, and equality between persons.<sup>35</sup>

Marriage has been described as the enterprise in which the general public expects a relatively high percentage of the people to enter and an even higher percentage to be successful. When a marriage begins to flounder couples are faced with difficult and daunting choices of whether to stick it out for the sake of children, try the long and painful process of repairing the marriage, or get divorced. The strong belief in the permanency of marriage vows may prevent an abused spouse from considering separation or divorce as options for dealing with domestic violence.

To illustrate further how Biblical teaching has influenced many victims of domestic violence to remain in abusive relationships, consider these images from the Bible:

....and he writes her a certificate of divorce , puts it in her hand and sends her out....<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Deut. 24:1.

...where is the certificate of your mother's divorce, whom I put away?<sup>37</sup>

...I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce<sup>38</sup>

...whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes to commit adultery.<sup>39</sup>

...Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commit adultery.<sup>40</sup>

...a wife is not to depart from her husband.<sup>41</sup>

...But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband.<sup>42</sup>

The general teaching of the early church was that the true marriage of baptized believers was indissoluble. For the Christian, the promise of faithfulness "for better or worse...until death do us part" is commonly taken to mean "stay in the marriage no matter what, even though the death of one or more family members is a real possibility in an abusive family situation."<sup>43</sup>

Jews view marriage as permanent, but "until death do us part" is not part of the ceremony. The Jewish attitude embodies a very delicate balance. Marriage is taken very seriously. It is a primary religious obligation and should not be entered into or discarded flippantly. Nevertheless, since the days of Deuteronomy, Jewish tradition has recognized

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<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 50:1.

<sup>38</sup> Jer. 3:8.

<sup>39</sup> Matt. 5:32.

<sup>40</sup> Luke 16:18.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Cor. 7:10.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor. 7:11.

<sup>43</sup> Fortune, Violence in the Family, 4-5.

the unfortunate reality that some couples are hopelessly incompatible and divorce may be a necessary option.

For some Christians, their denominations strong doctrinal position against divorce may inhibit them from exercising this means of dealing with violence in the family. In any case, there is a commonly assumption that any marriage is better than no marriage at all and, therefore, that a marriage should be maintained at any cost. This assumption arises from a superficial view of marriage, a view concerned only with appearances and not with substances. In other words, as long as marriage and family relationships maintain a facade of normalcy, there is a refusal by church and community to look any closer for fear of seeing abuse or violence in the home. The church teaches that the covenant of Christian marriage is a lifelong, sacred commitment made between two persons.

The church teaches that one or both partners can violate a covenant. It is common thinking in both Jewish and Christian traditions that violence or abuse violates the covenant and fractures a relationship. In violent homes, divorce is not breaking up families. Violence and abuse are breaking up families. Divorce is often the painful, public acknowledgement of an already accomplished fact.

### Summary

The crisis of domestic violence affects people physically, psychological, and spiritually, Each of these dimensions of the problem must be address, both for the victims and for those in the family who abuse them. Approaches from either a secular or a religious perspective alone, certain needs and issues needs tend to be disregarded. This reflects a tremendous lack of understanding of the nature of domestic violence and its impact on people's lives. Treatment of families and individuals experiencing violence and

abuse requires integrating the needs of the whole person. Thus, the importance of developing a shared understanding and cooperation between the various domestic violence treatment agencies within the military context, and chaplains to deal with this issue, cannot be overly emphasized. As the saying goes in the military, while we build our internal kingdoms “stove-piping,” our people are still not getting their “bang for the buck.”

While my initial approach to this project has focused primarily on domestic violence in the military, namely, the Navy and Marine Corps, the truth is violence doesn't understand boundaries. Chaplains in the Navy are persons who represent various religious faith groups in the local community. They are also pastors, priests, and rabbis who just happen to be commission officers in the sea services. Therefore, whether you are a minister in the local community or on active duty in the military, I hope that this project will have broad application. For too long the religious community has remained on the sideline while our people suffer. It has been my experience, as a chaplain in the Navy, if nothing more, people in crisis will invariably raise questions of a religious nature. If not addressed in some way, at some point, they will inevitably become roadblocks to the individual's effort to move on with his or her life.

Because many of the questions raised by victims of abuse are religious or theological in nature, the role of the chaplain in the domestic violence treatment process should be expanded. For a pastor, priest, or rabbi approaching domestic violence from a religious perspective, there is little question about the relevance of religious concerns. These are primary for any religious person. Rather, the clergy may doubt the importance of dealing with concerns for shelter, safety, intervention, and treatment. “These people need to get right with God and everything will be fine.” This perspective overlooks the

fact that these other issues are practical and important as well. Domestic violence is complex and potentially lethal; these seeming mundane concerns represent immediate and critical needs to the individual.

Domestic violence is destroying families in the sea service. Approximately two years ago, then acting Chief of Chaplains, A. Byron Holderby, Jr., forwarded copies of Violence in the Family by Marie M. Fortune to every chaplain. This workshop curriculum presents a coherent, step-by-step approach for open discussion and education on this issue. This material can also be used as is or adapted to meet the needs of individual commands. Videotapes, emphasizing themes in the curriculum, were also sent to Fleet Chaplains for distribution at area training. We would like to see domestic violence impacted. Therefore, programs dealing with this issue should be taken seriously. As we help our sea service families deal with this difficult challenge, we are fulfilling our vision of strengthening the family relationships through pastoral care. I am confident that we can make a difference.

#### Thesis Restatement

This project has assessed the current problem of domestic violence in the Navy and Marine Corps. It has offered suggestions and recommendation that the sea services can take to address the problem caused by domestic violence. Because domestic violence has a theological aspect, domestic violence programs in the sea services should be provided that addresses the emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual dimension of the individual.

### Conclusion

There are some short-term and long-term ways in which to address domestic violence in the military. The three short-term ways to address the problem are:

1. There should be more collaboration between the Navy and the civilian world in tackling the problem. Integrate resources. The military's usual approach is to identify a problem, create a system and predict an outcome. In the battle against domestic violence, however, the system is not the whole problem. The problem can be impacted by ongoing education, tweak the treatment process to include the chaplain, and constant vigilance. There are a lot of misperceptions and myths concerning domestic violence that are culturally ingrained. Thus, education and training should take place at all levels throughout the military community; starting with the Navy and Marine Corps leadership.
2. Provide a treatment program for batterers. Considering that women are the more frequent victims of serious violent attacks, they should be the focus of the most immediate treatment. On the other hand, failing to address the needs of the abusive male does little to prevent their continued use of violence with their partner. Offer intervention for offenders while holding them accountable. Intervention should focus on helping the abuser to immediately stop the abuse by changing his or her behavior through administrative and legal actions, education and counseling, and spirituality growth and development.
3. Enlarge the role of the chaplain in the intervention and treatment process. In the past, treatment programs have focused on the physical, intellectual, and emotional aspect of the person. There is a fourth dimension to the domestic violence problem that needs to be addressed, and that is the spiritual aspect. The very specific charter of the chaplain in the military is to provide for the spiritual and emotional well being of military personnel.

For the long-term, there are three specific ways in which to address the problem.

1. There should be accountability at every level, including the Navy and Marine Corps leadership. There should be "zero tolerance" when it comes to domestic violence. It's common knowledge that commanding officers have a vested interest, usually, in keeping a highly trained Sailor or Marine on board which they have been accused of battering. Commanding officers can also be reluctant to meddle in their service member's domestic troubles, particularly with

good performers and especially now that the Navy is struggling to fill its ships and offices. Since domestic violence occurs at all rank levels in the military, personnel should all be treated the same when it comes to treatment as well punishment.

2. Leadership plays an integral part in the battle against domestic violence. Just as the military fought discrimination, and drug and alcohol abuse, the same kind of energy and attention should be given to domestic violence, another social ill that destroys families, and scars children and ultimately affects military readiness. Families will be spared both pain and suffering, when leadership takes seriously the problem of domestic violence.
3. The Navy and Marine Corps should be proactive by establishing programs that strengthen families in the sea services. Experts insist that many of our nation's social problems can be contributed to the breakdown in the family, and the lack of values. The military should develop and fund programs that strengthen families. Our Navy and Marine Corps personnel are our nation's most precious investment. The burgeoning challenge of strengthening families cannot be effectively addressed if it's viewed in isolation. Strengthening families also requires attention to relationship with self, with Deity, and with others. All these relationships are interdependent. Leadership support sends a signal that the importance of family is more than rhetoric.

The military has made tremendous achievements in its battle against discrimination, drugs and alcohol abuse, now it turning its attention to domestic violence. In fact, in 1979, family programs (Navy Family Services) were formed to help families with a wide variety of domestic problems. It was part of the movement of looking at the quality of life, as more and more service members had families. It is a commonly held belief that no other employer exerts the professional and personal control over its personnel as does the military. That may be one reason that the military feels pressure now to wade into the messy arena of family problems. That control means the military has the ability to be a model for the civilian world, as was the case in the aforementioned areas.



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